

DUDLEY CHRONICLE



Thursday, December 19, 2013

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What's on

Chance to check festive viewing
Starts Page 23



Let it glow

Community rally to make family dream come true
See Page 13



Sport

Dismay for battling DKs in rugby defeat
See Page 36



Bereaved will face burial fee price rise

BURIAL and cremation fees will rise by up to 15 per cent under plans announced by cash-strapped Dudley Council as it battles to trim millions from its budgets.

Mourners in the borough could face the increase from April, if the proposals are approved.

It comes as the authority battles to save almost £60 million over the next three years.

Bosses said today the fees would still remain among the lowest in the Black Country and cash would be used to help with finding more land for burials.

They said every effort has been made to minimise the increases being proposed.

Under the plans, the cost of exclusive right of burial would rise from £1,400 to £1,610 for an earthen grave and from £1,573 to £1,809 for a bricked grave. These are increases of 12 and 15 per cent.

Cremation costs for an adult will increase by seven per cent from £607 to £650. And the cost of having additional chapel time, including an organ and organist, will go up from £118 to £126 per half hour.

The fee for a woodland grave will go up from £325 to £374.

The proposals are due to be discussed at a meeting on Monday.

Drugs seized in town raid

DRUGS were seized during raids in Dudley town centre on Monday morning.

Around 30 officers swooped on three properties at Northgate House in High Street in Dudley and found a quantity of illegal drugs.

A 49-year-old Dudley man has since been charged with fraud by false representation and was bailed to appear before Dudley magistrates on January 7.

A 47-year-old woman was arrested on suspicion of possessing a class A drug. She has been bailed pending further investigations.

POLICE LAUNCH WATCH ON PUBS

A PUB watch scheme aimed at combating booze-fuelled crime has been launched by police in Dudley

Licensees and managers of bars and pubs in the town centre will be on the lookout for troublemakers and will be in regular contact with the police.

They will be able to warn each other about potential problems caused by rowdy revellers making their way around the nightspots in the town.

Licensing officer Pc Natalie Lees, from West Midlands Police, is encouraging door staff of licensed premises to connect to the police 'radio link'.

It will give them access to a radio system linking them to the borough's CCTV control room and town centre police teams.

A forum has also been set up for the licensees, who have signed up for the scheme, allowing them to share information and intelligence in a bid to stamp out potential trouble.

Teams

Thirteen licensees from premises within the town are members of Dudley Pub Watch. These include the Shrewsbury Arms, Full Moon, The Court House, Saracens Head, Little Barrel, The Griffin, The Castle, The Malt Shovel, The Foundry, The Fellows, The Grange and The Old Priory.

Pc Lees said: "Whilst Dudley does not suffer from excessive numbers of alcohol related incidents we are determined to ensure that the numbers of crimes remain low, so officers are working closely with local licensees to robustly target any individuals causing trouble."

"The message from the police and Pub Watch is have a great, safe night in Dudley, and police and licensees will work together to seek and arrest those few people who cause trouble in the town centre."

Report by Heather Large

She added: "We will not tolerate instances of alcohol related disorder and by working closely with the licensees we will ensure that those involved in such incidents will not be welcomed at licensed premises within the town."

Meanwhile, Up to £200 is being offered to revellers to report drink-drivers to police this Christmas.

Rewards are being dished out as part of a police crackdown in the West Midlands which will also see those convicted over the festive period named and shamed on a website.

Police hope the incentive will help cut the numbers getting behind the wheel after drinking or taking drugs. The money will be handed out by charity Crimestoppers if a tip-off leads to arrest and prosecution.

Inspector Greg Jennings, who is leading the force's seasonal drink drive campaign, said: "In some cases they would not dream of drink driving, or taking drugs, at other times of the year but lose their common sense as Christmas draws near."

People can report a suspected drink or drugs driver anonymously on 0800 555 111 or through 101.

Babies goo-goo to the zoo



BABY'S first Christmas will definitely be remembered by the families of Seth Brown and Sebastian Walker.

Six-month-old Seth and Sebastian, aged three months, are the sons of two senior keepers at Dudley Zoo and will be spending their first yuletide on site watching their dads prepare Christmas lunch for 1,300 animals!

Assistant curator Richard Brown said: "December 25 means business as usual, as the site's rare and exotic animals, which include Sumatran tigers, Bornean orangutans and Santa's reindeer, all needed to be fed and watered."

"Christmas Day is the only day of the

year the zoo is closed to visitors and the only time we really get to spend alone with the animals, so it's quite magical and both Adam and myself want to share that with our babies."

Early

Dads and lads will also include Richard's two-year-old son, Archie, who has promised to open his presents extra early on Christmas morning if he can accompany his father and brother to the zoo.

Festive duties across the zoo's 40-acre site are shared between staff and those not on the rota call in with a few treats for their favourite charges.

Mr Walker said: "The animals do become extensions of our own families. We're lucky to work with some of the rarest animals in the world every single day."

The zoo keeper said: "It's special to spend some extra time with them when the zoo is so quiet before we head home to begin the festivities and tuck into our own Christmas dinners."

He added: "I'm sure we've started a tradition and when our boys are a few years older we will both be bringing them on site with us to deliver their own Christmas presents to the animals."

Schools are back on top of the table

SCHOOL staff across Dudley have been thanked by the council's education chief for lifting the borough back to being the top performer in the Black Country.

The borough climbed 12 places to 106 out of 152 local authorities, according to tables released by the Department for Education.

It comes after the decision to record reading and writing results separately for the first time in headline statistics.

In Dudley last year 77 per cent of youngsters managed to achieve level 4 or above in English and maths. This year, 74 per cent of pupils managed at least the same level in all three Rs of reading, writing and maths.

The borough was the only one locally to see its writing marks match those its pupils managed in reading but fewer pupils managed the same results in maths.

Dudley is second only to Sandwell in the Black Country for the proportion of pupils attending a good or outstanding primary school. The figure is 72 per cent.

Councillor Tim Crumpston, cabinet member for children, libraries and lifelong learning, said: "I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone in Dudley who has contributed to the success of our schools."

■ **Primates praised - see page 5**

Bus fares to go up by 10p

BUSS fares in the West Midlands are going up 10p in the new year, it was confirmed this week.

National Express West Midlands will charge £2.10 for a single fare.

Weekly travel cards are also going up, as are Daysaver tickets, although family day tickets are to be frozen as student passes and some children's passes.

A child's single fare will go up from £1 to £1.05. Fares will also rise on the Midland Metro tram line from January 2.



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NEWS**CONTENTS**

Peter Rhodes	4
News Feature	6
Letters	7
Memory Lane	8
Club News	17
Grand Review	22
Christmas TV	23 - 27
Panto Round-up	28
Motoring	29 - 30
Classified	31 - 34
Sport	35 - 36

CONTACT US

Have you got a story or an event you want covered? The Chronicle and the Express & Star have a team of reporters covering Dudley who can help:

Tom Mason: 01902 319550
tom.mason@expressandstar.co.uk
Charlotte Lilley: 01902 319688
charlotte.lilley@expressandstar.co.uk
Will Ackermann: 01543 465305
will.ackermann@expressandstar.co.uk
Heather Large: 01384 353203
heather.large@expressandstar.co.uk
Louise Jew: 01384 353201
louise.jew@expressandstar.co.uk
Alex Ross: 01384 353207
alex.ross@expressandstar.co.uk
Andrew Turton: 01384 353202
andrew.turton@expressandstar.co.uk
Lee Watton: 01384 353230
lee.watton@expressandstar.co.uk

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Sports: E-mail: chronsport@expressandstar.co.uk

Photographic John Sambrooks

Tel 01902 319431

Advertising:

Nikki Cope
Tel: 01902 319573 E-mail: n.cope@expressandstar.co.uk

Emma Parkes
Tel: 01384 353234 E-mail: e.parkes@expressandstar.co.uk

Distribution: Paul Jones
Tel: 01902 319990 E-mail: p.jones@expressandstar.co.uk

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**Tributes to former mayor who was a 'voice for the people'**

AN Honorary Alderman and former Mayor of Dudley with a political career spanning more than 30 years has died. Tributes have been made to former Dudley Councillor Cyril Woodall, 83.

Mr Woodall was mayor of the borough from 1990 to 1991 and was awarded the title of Honorary Alderman for his outstanding services to Dudley in 2006. He was awarded the MBE in 2007 for services to local government.

Councillor David Sparks, leader of the

council, said: "Cyril was a Labour stalwart having devoted his life to his trade union and the party."

Mr Woodall was first elected to the council in 1973 and was one of the founder members of education charity St Thomas' Network. He also served as deputy leader of the council and on the development control committee.

Councillor Shaukat Ali said: "Cyril was a great man and very passionate about St Thomas' and believed in

working to bring about fairness and justice. He was a strong voice for the people. He will be greatly missed."

Current Mayor Councillor Alan Finch, said: "Cyril served this borough and its people extremely well and leaves a very proud history."

Mr Woodall died on December 6. His funeral is at St Thomas' Church, Dudley, today, Thursday, from 1.45pm. The procession will drive past the Council House for people to pay their respects at 2.20pm.

MP will give pay rise to a charity

AN MP has announced he will donate any pay increase he receives to charity.

Ian Austin, for Dudley North, has become the latest MP to make the pledge.

The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) has announced proposals for an 11 per cent rise. It would lift to lift salaries by £7,600 to £74,000 from 2015.

But Mr Austin has spoken out against the proposals and has said he will give the extra cash to organisations in Dudley if the wage rise does go ahead.

Bonkers

"I think this increase is completely bonkers and I won't be accepting it," he said.

"I'm from Dudley and being the town's MP is a huge privilege."

"It's a well-paid job but I earned more before I was an MP so I'm not in it for the money. Times are tough for people in Dudley."

"When so many local families are struggling with the cost of living and others are subject to pay restraint, I'll use it to increase my support for good causes and organisations in Dudley."

Quarry plan sound shields for residents

WORK on earth mounds to shield homes from noise from a quarry will be brought forward.

Construction of the bunds were due to take place in two stages – one in 2014 and the other in 2015. But bosses at Ketley Quarry in Kingswinford have now decided to build both next year. They are earmarked for sites near properties in Oregon Close.

It was feared that some residents could have been disturbed twice by the work at different times. A planning application was submitted so that the bunds could be constructed in 25 days, weather permitting, after drainage was installed.

Some residents objected to the scheme being brought forward, saying they would be disturbed earlier.

Chairman of the development control committee Councillor Qadar Zada said: "It's unfortunate that the residents live next to a quarry but the quarry has been there a long time."

Horsing around for charity

Beth Robson, in the Tiger suit, and Jade Gilbride held a fancy dress horse ride for charity

HORSE riders Jade Gilbride, 14, and her friend Beth Robson, 17, decided to raise money for Cancer Research by trotting through Sedgley in hooded onesies.

Jade decided to dress as a Christmas tree,

while Beth turned into a tiger for the fundraising ride and their mounts, Skye and Norman, were decorated with tinsel to complete the festive look.

The girls plan further fundraising rides.



Alan Nicholson – debts

officer but when the official promised to have the matter investigated the woman was too frightened to co-operate. She was terrified of Nicholson, who she knew as a 'white van man named Alan'.

Her revelation was passed to the Adult Safeguarding team at Dudley Council, working with Dudley Trading Standards. An official explained: "This enabled the authorities to act quickly to protect the victim from further financial abuse."

Dudley Trading Standards officers supported by police, arrested Nicholson at his flower stall on July 7, 2011. He was immediately banned from the market.

He had no receipts for any of the alleged work he had done for the woman.

Father-of-three Nicholson, of Kingsbury Road, Erdington, who had no previous convictions, was liked by many. He was said to be ashamed and to be planning to pay his mortgage back to his victim home to pay his victim back.

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Public are now asked to keep a cab watch

REVIEWS of taxi drivers and firms could be published online under plans being considered by council bosses.

Proposals to set up a customer feedback scheme in Dudley have been drawn up.

It would allow people to score the service they received and also answer questions on whether the driver was licensed by the council and had the correct signs.

Phone

They would also be to say whether they used a mobile phone while driving or used a taxi meter and whether the fare quoted was the same as the one charged at the end of the journey.

The proposals have been put forward by chairman of the taxi committee Councillor Richard Body. They were being considered by members yesterday.

A report, which will go before councillors, says: "The feedback scheme will put the emphasis on compliance of good driver practice."

It is suggested that any driver receiving poor customer reviews will alert the taxi base owner that a driver may not be achieving high standards of professionalism which in turn may affect the owner's business.

"This may lead to a higher level of self-policing of poor drivers."

■ Taxi colour U-turn – see page 18

Politician in cycle accident

A BLACK Country MP was knocked unconscious and taken to hospital after coming off his bike.

Ian Austin, who is co-chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Cycling Group, was on his bicycle in Broad Street, Kingswinford, when the accident happened. The 48-year-old MP for Dudley North has no memory of the incident but wants to thank medical staff and the woman who called an ambulance.

He spent about eight hours in the accident and emergency department at Russells Hall Hospital. The father-of-three said: "The nurse asked me if I knew what day or year it was and I couldn't answer properly. Then she asked what I do for a living. When I said I was an MP, I think they thought I really was in trouble."

Archie's festive design wins

FOUR-YEAR-OLD Archie Johnson was the prize-winning pupil from a Nether-ton school who came up with the design chosen for the Dudley Chronicle official Christmas card.

Pupils at Northfield Road Primary School were invited to submit festive designs for the card, giving the panel of judges a tough job of picking a favourite.

Little Archie's design showing Father Christmas came tops and the newspaper's advertising sales manager Pete Hazel presented the young winner with a framed copy of his Christmas card. A gift of £50 was also given to the school.

The card will be sent to The Chronicle's many regular advertising customers.



Archie Johnson receives his framed Christmas card from advertising sales manager Pete Hazel

Toolmaker to open second factory as 40 jobs are created

A TOOLMAKING and injection moulding company is to open its second factory in Brierley Hill next year with the expansion expected to create 40 new jobs by the end of 2016.

Peartree Lane-based business Petford Tools, which designs and manufactures tools for some of the biggest names in the automotive sector, has purchased a new 3,000 square metre premises in Brierley Hill.

The business was founded in 1970 by chairman Mick Parr, who originally operated from a single unit in Brierley Hill.

Today the business employs 140 staff and has become one of the country's leading independent toolmakers and injection moulders.

Managing director Mel Sinar said the new site would help it meet an increase in orders.

NEWS

in brief

Terror suspect is kept in custody

AN unemployed man has been remanded in custody after appearing in court charged with possessing a terrorist publication.

Usman Hussain Choudhary, aged 33, from Terry Road, Dudley, was arrested on Thursday by officers from the West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit.

He faces two charges relating to the distribution of a terrorist publication. He was remanded in custody to appear at London's Old Bailey on December 20.

Town bus lane is to be open to all

A MAIN route through Dudley town centre will be opened up to all traffic for the first time in 12 years as part of regeneration plans.

The proposal to open King Street to through traffic will cost up to £500,000 – but council bosses say it will help both motorists and businesses along the road outside the Churchill shopping precinct.

At the moment only buses and taxis can use the route.

Fizzog take comic look at the movies

POPULAR Black Country comedy trio Fizzog – Deb Nicholls, Sue Hawkins, and Jacky Fellows, from Stourbridge, Wordsley and Wombourne respectively – have donned wacky outfits for their own calendar based on famous movies – and stripped off for a couple of risqué poses.

In American Beauties, their modesty is protected merely by cabbage leaves, rather than rose petals like in scenes from Oscar-winner American Beauty.

Market closes on four festive days

DUDLEY Market is open Monday to Saturday from 8am to 4pm throughout the festive period but will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, December 27 and New Year's Day.

The market will close earlier than normal on December 24 and December 31.

Fresh start at flat

VULNERABLE young people will get the chance to make a fresh start thanks to a makeover for a two-bedroomed flat. A team from insurance brokers Hettle Andrews gave their time to decorate a flat in Wollaston for the Living Springs charity.

New bishop is the youngest



The new Bishop of Dudley, the Reverend Canon Graham Usher, hands over a food donation to founder Wendy Fryatt and Jen Coleman during a visit to the Halesowen Food Bank at Little Cornbow Bank in Halesowen during a tour of the area.

DUDLEY'S new bishop will be 43-year-old father of two, The Rev Canon Graham Usher, who becomes the youngest bishop in the country.

He succeeds the 56-year-old Rt Rev David Walker, who moved from Dudley to become Bishop of Manchester in October.

Mr Usher was welcomed to the Black Country last week by clergy, civic dignitaries and children at Jessons Church of England Primary School in Dudley.

He was ordained in 1996 and is currently rector and lecturer at Hexham Abbey, in the Diocese of Newcastle.

Bishop of Worcester, the Rt Rev Dr

John Inge, described him as 'an exceptionally able priest'.

Mr Usher said: "I am honoured, delighted and not a little daunted to have been asked to become the Bishop of Dudley. I am greatly looking forward to getting to know the people and places of the Black Country and the wider Diocese of Worcester."

There will be a service of welcome for him at St Thomas's Church, Dudley at on May 3

and he will be installed as an Honorary Canon of Worcester Cathedral on May 4.

A BOMBMAKER from Dudley who made crude explosives using fireworks and gunpowder has been jailed for more than three years.

Police found a vodka bottle containing black powder, tissue paper and a fuse when they searched Liam Hedley's flat in Wolverhampton. The one-litre bottle, which also had three fireworks strapped to it using cable ties, was found in a rucksack at the foot of a bed, the court heard.

Officers also discovered a second device by a television, a glass jar with a fuse and containing a 'low explosive composition' and a compound similar to one found in commercial fireworks.

Reckless

Screws, ball bearings and latex gloves were also found in the bedsit, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told last week.

Ms Sati Ruck, prosecuting, said tests showed both devices were capable of exploding and causing injury.

Mr Malcolm Fowler, defending, said his client had a 'reckless curiosity' but 'little awareness of the potential for harm'.

Hedley, 28, was arrested August 29 over an unrelated matter that did not lead to criminal proceedings.

But while being questioned concerns were raised, triggering the police search at his home.

Hedley pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing to two charges of having an illegal explosive substance.

The first related to gunpowder and the other to a low quantity explosive composition.

His pleas were made on the basis that he made both others.

Hedley was sentenced to three years for each of the charges, to run concurrently, plus two months for breaching a suspended sentence.



Liam Hedley – bottle bomb

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NEWS

**THE BEST
OF PETER
RHODES**

SCIENTISTS in China are reported to be developing technology that can make objects seemingly disappear. I can't see that working, can you?

□□□□□

FROM this week's report on plump schoolchildren, we learn that a trustee of the National Obesity Forum is a Mr. Fry.

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THE official version of the Mandela story, parroted unquestioningly by the Western media, is that he was adored by all his people and that he created a free and equal South Africa committed to democracy. So why were there tens of thousands of empty seats at the FNB football stadium on Tuesday? And why did the crowd stand and cheer that bloody-handed old land-grabber and vote-rigger, Robert Mugabe? You might easily form the opinion that now the national father-figure with his message of forgiveness and reconciliation has passed on, some South Africans are itching to try Comrade Mugabe's policy of simply grabbing the white man's riches.

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I THOUGHT at the time that the chap doing the deaf sign language at the Mandela memorial ceremony looked a bit worried. Now we learn that Thamsanqa Jantjie's "signing" was gibberish. It makes me wonder how much of the signing we see on British telly is 100 per cent accurate. They do seem to cram an awful lot of words into one or two hand gestures. You know the sort of thing. The newsreader says: "Prime Minister David Cameron and Foreign Secretary William Hague today returned from a five day conference on science and technology in Uzbekistan" and in the corner of your screen, the signer puts up three fingers, touches his nose and tweaks his ear. So which bit of that was "Uzbekistan"?

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IF I enter a mosque I remove my shoes. If I go into a synagogue I cover my head with a kippa. When you enter the premises of another faith or culture, it is common courtesy to respect their ways. And when extremist religious speakers enter British universities they should accept the customs of their hosts. But Universities UK seriously suggests that audiences might be segregated, with men and women sitting apart, if a fundamentalist speaker requested it. UK bills itself as "the definitive voice for universities in the UK," should be ashamed of itself. Apartheid was demolished in South Africa and segregation was defeated in the States. The idea of reintroducing something similar in British universities to placate some sexually-confused throwbacks who'd be happier living in the 7th century is revolting.

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SO HOW do you deal with an organisation which attempts to sexually segregate an audience on religious grounds? I'm with the emailer who suggests men should whisper earnestly to the stewards: "My religion says I must sit with females."

□□□□□

CHRISTMAS is usually a great time for animal charities to produce photos of their most adorable creatures and rattle the collecting tin. But how on earth can any dog, cat or donkey sanctuary compete against 100 baby seals washed up in last week's tidal surge and now being cared for at the RSPCA's East Winch Wildlife Centre? These pups are the oozy-snookummy sweetest little things you have ever seen, a heart-tugging cross between Bambi and the Little Mermaid, all wide-eyed, shiny-nosed, mewling for bottled milk and trying to suckle the TV camera lens. That's where the Xmas charity cheques will go. Signed, sealed and delivered.

□□□□□

ONE woman plucked pure, heavenly magic from a Celtic harp. Another seemed to be trying to extract a tune from an oven-ready turkey, which turned out to be a primitive bagpipe. I am just back from a thoroughly uplifting evening of medieval music with Joglareia, a five-piece band performing the sort of music our families enjoyed 20 generations ago. It was the perfect start to yuletide.

□□□□□

**Don't miss Peter Rhodes
every Monday to Friday in
your Express & Star**

Motorist jailed after police find cocaine

A DRUG addict who was found with cocaine with a street value of more than £4,000 after police pulled him over for speeding has been jailed for three years.

Adam Wrench was driving on High Street in Kingswinford on May 15 when he was stopped by police after overtaking vehicles at speed.

Wrench admitted he was driving the Peugeot 407 without the owner's

permission and that he did not have a driving licence.

Mr Mark Rees, prosecuting, told Wolverhampton Crown Court that the 29-year-old was taken to Brierley Hill police station where a search uncovered 3g of cocaine hidden in his pocket and 42.6g of the drug in his trouser leg.

When his home in Enville Road, Wall Heath, was searched later that

night police found a further 12.4g of cocaine, as well as 43.4g of benzocaine, an anaesthetic powder often used to dilute cocaine.

Officers also found a stun gun, a small amount of cannabis and an envelope containing £1,685.

Mr Rees said: "The street value of the drugs seized was just over £4,000."

Mr Jonathan Barker, defending,

said Wrench started using cocaine "four or five years ago."

Wrench pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of a Class A drug with intent to supply, one count of possession of a prohibited weapon, one count of possession of a Class B drug and using a car without a licence or third party insurance.

He was sentenced to three years in prison.

Parking plan hits funding problem

PLANS to create extra parking spaces in an effort to stop drivers leaving their cars on a narrow road have hit the skids after a vital funding bid was rejected.

Shoppers using the Arcade in Upper Gornal regularly park their cars along Pale Street, behind the Tesco supermarket, making it difficult for vehicles to pass at busy times.

Residents living along the road have also complained they struggle to get off their own driveways due to the number of cars parked.

Grass

Plans to create new parking spaces off the carriageway by cutting into a small grass bank to the rear of the supermarket had been submitted.

But councillors behind the scheme said they would have to go back to the drawing board after a funding bid for the work failed.

Upper Gornal and Woodsetton councillor Kieran Casey said he had been left disappointed by the decision.

"The funding bid was considered by the area housing panel and was rejected on the grounds it was not believed the scheme would be of significant benefit to residents," he explained.

But he said he and other ward representatives were not going to give up on the scheme and were now looking at alternative ways of securing the funding.

"We are talking with officers and seeing where we can go from here," he added.

Hospice opens 17th shop

Maidensbridge Primary School pupils Oliver Coote, Mai Lees, Daniel Coote, Jade Charlton and Sam Pearman with Councillor Pete Lowe, managers Abi Worsey, Paul Robinson and Helen Hobbs and hospice chief executive Stevan Jackson at the opening

THE ribbon has been cut to open the latest shop raising vital funds for Stourbridge's Mary Stevens Hospice.

The store in Albion Parade, Wall Heath, was opened by youngsters from Maidensbridge Primary School. It brings the total number of shops run by the charity to 17.

Money generated by the stores helps the hospice with its work caring for people with conditions including cancer, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease.

The hospice, in Hagley Road, needs

around £2 million a year to fund care. Managing director of Mary Stevens Hospice Trading Ltd Simon Henwood said: "The trading company has gone from strength to strength with the expansion of its activities both in recycling and the very popular coffee shop in Stourbridge.

"As the need for services continues to grow we try to keep pace to help ensure the doors stay open, but without the support of our community, who continue to be brilliant, this just wouldn't be the case."

IT WAS to be their dream holiday to celebrate retirement in the Maldives. But the luxury trip turned to tragedy.

A coroner heard that Elizabeth Bastable had been snorkelling on the last day of her trip when she heard a commotion from the shore and looked round to see a man being pulled from the water. She spotted the man's vest and instantly realised it was her partner Paul.

The 63-year-old retired sales manager had collapsed while wading out in waist-high water to fetch an underwater camera from his wife. Despite emergency treatment on the beach, Mr Bastable, of Sandringham Way, Brierley Hill, was pronounced dead 40 minutes later, at 4.40pm on March 24.

Inquest

At an inquest at Dudley Coroners' Court last week, his wife Elizabeth, a retired administrator, said: "It is very, very hard. I have got grandchildren, they are all a big support to me."

Mr Bastable's son Richard, a police officer, described what happened.

He said: "They had been on holiday. It was the Sunday – they had been due to fly back on the Monday."

"They stayed in a water bungalow on a reef. Mother had gone out snorkelling with an underwater camera. Dad had elected to stay at the bungalow and when mother left he was on a sun lounger relaxing."

"Mother had been out snorkelling but she has become aware of a commotion on the beach, in the shallow water."

She saw a man being pulled from the water and recognised the man's vest as her husband's.

Mrs Bastable said: "He was coming out to me to have the camera off me."

It was initially thought he died because of drowning, but during examination, pathologist Dr Sixto Bati-

tang found his arteries were severely clogged up due to a condition called atherosclerosis. He also had a history of high blood pressure.

Black Country Coroner Robin Balmain said: "I don't believe your dad drowned. If he had fallen or tripped he would have got back up."

He said he had 'sufficient evidence' from Dr Bati-

tang's pathology report to conclude Mr Bastable had suffered a heart attack.

Richard Bastable said:

"From our discussions as a family, it was the assumption we made – a potential heart attack."

He said his father was a little overweight and had suffered from stress at work and had received treatment for high blood pressure.

He retired in September last year.

After the hearing Richard

Bastable said: "We are very close and this has hurt everyone."

Mr Balmain concluded Mr

Bastable died from natural causes.

Boost for charities

STAFF at the Tipton and Coseley Building Society handed cheques totalling £5,600 to two charities.

The Tipton's annual charity golf day raised £3,100, and the society's charitable foundation also donated £2,500. Beacon Centre for the Blind in Sedgley and Compton Hospice in Wolverhampton each received £2,800.

Lee Judson, general manager sales and marketing at The Tipton, said: "We have supported Beacon and Compton for so many years and we will continue to do so to enable them to continue with their valuable work."

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Man grew own drugs to use as medicine

A MAN caught growing 35 cannabis plants for his own medicinal use has been spared an immediate jail term.

Sylvester Dennis, who had suffered a stroke and had heart problems, could not afford to buy cannabis so decided to grow his own, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

Mr Robert Edwards, prosecuting, said that police attended the Hallchurch Road home of Dennis in Netherton at 8.10am on September 19 where he was asked whether there was a cannabis in the property, and indicated the rear bedroom.

Police discovered two tents in the room, the smaller tent contained 19 cannabis plants, whilst the larger tent had 16 more substantial plants.

The 53-year-old, had pleaded guilty to producing cannabis. Judge Martin Walsh told the court that he would sentence him on the basis that the drug was for his own use.

Dennis was sentenced to 26 weeks in prison suspended for 18 months, and he was ordered to pay an £80 victim surcharge.

Society plan to help first time buyers

THE Tipton and Coseley Building Society has launched a new range of 95 per cent mortgages to help local house hunters buy their first home.

The launch of the two and three-year products means local first time buyers need to raise a deposit of just over £5,500 based on the average price of a home in the West Midlands.

Applications are restricted to properties in B, DY, WS and WV postcode areas and are available to customers who come directly into the society's branches in Sedgley, Coseley, Tipton and Bilston.

Richard Newton, the society's chief executive, said: "We are committed to helping local people buy their own home and understand that first time buyers in particular may need additional support."

The two and three-year variable discounted products offer rates of 4.49 per cent, including a 0.5 per cent discount until December 31, 2015 and 2016 respectively.

Ticket fraudster used internet to con music fans



Matthew Thompson

THEY were promised tickets to see some of the biggest live acts in the world – including Rihanna and Take That – but fans were left disappointed and out of pocket when sold tickets that didn't exist by Dudley conman Matthew Thompson.

They fell victim to a ruse set up by Thompson who used websites such as eBay and Gumtree to sell fake tickets to events.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard that Thompson disguised his identity with pseudonyms and used photographs of tickets taken off the internet to convince people he was genuine.

Mr Timothy Harrington, prosecuting, said that between October 2010 and July 2011 Thompson conned seven people out of nearly £3,000 in total. The first victim had spotted tickets to a Take That

show at Wembley Arena on the auction website eBay in September 2010. Thompson was selling two tickets for £330. Mr Harrington said: "He invented a story as to why the tickets were going spare, and had given her his phone number."

In December Thompson pretended to be a seller called Ben Adams who was selling VIP tickets to the same Take That show. He used email addresses that matched his pseudonym and the victim transferred £825 for tickets which she believed would be put in the post. They never arrived.

In the same month Thompson sold further tickets for more than £200. When he questioned why they had not turned up, Thompson started to send him 'unpleasant' text messages, the court was told. Between October 2010 and July 2011 he

sold fake tickets to other eager fans. He was caught after a police raid on his home in October 2011 where officers discovered ledgers which had details of his pseudonyms.

Thompson had pleaded guilty to seven counts of fraud by false representation at an earlier hearing. Some customers received a partial refund but due to his lack of assets Thompson was only ordered to pay back £1 under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

Mr Gurdeep Garcha, defending, said the 33-year-old from Tudor Vale, Upper Gornal, had no previous convictions and was sorry.

Judge John Warner jailed Thompson for 20 weeks, suspended for two years, and ordered him to complete 200 hours of unpaid work, subjecting him to a curfew for 16 weeks.

Primaries are praised but other schools can do better

MOST pupils in Dudley attend a good or outstanding primary school – but children at secondary schools are not faring as well, a new report revealed today.

Seventy-two per cent of pupils in Dudley go to a good or outstanding primary school,

by Heather Large

"There are disadvantaged areas that provide an excellent education and affluent regions that could do much better", the report says.

Overall, the performance of the nation's primary schools has improved, Ofsted found.

Chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw said: "Children from similar backgrounds with similar abilities, but who happen to be born in different regions and attend different schools and colleges, can end up with widely different prospects because of the variable quality of their education."

The Annual Report 2012/13 for the West Midlands as a whole finds secondary school children are served well in the region.

It has the lowest proportion of inadequate secondary schools. The proportion of good or better primary schools has also increased.

Dudley's education boss Councillor Tim Crumpton said: "Our intention is to ensure that, within the next two years, every school in the borough achieves at least a 'good' grading. We are working to help them achieve this."

Scheme to transform town centre

DETAILED designs for a long-awaited multi-million pound revamp of Dudley town centre, transforming the market place, have been lodged.

Council leaders hope the £6.7 million project, due to start next month, will boost the area from the junction with High Street along Castle Street to the top of Castle Hill. There will be 74 stalls created in the new-look market square.

Santas on bikes for charity



Get in gear for Christmas – members of Stourbridge cycling club take part in their annual Santa ride for The Samaritans

SCORES of Santas and elves were on the move – but there was not a reindeer sleigh in sight.

Father Christmas and his helpers decided to get on their bikes to raise cash for charity The Samaritans.

Around 60 enthusiasts, belonging to a group called Stourbridge, donned festive gear for the mass cycle ride from Mary Stevens Park in Heath Lane, Stourbridge. Some even decorated their bikes with tinsel for the festive occasion.

They split into groups based on ability and headed for The Island Pool in Cookley by a variety of different routes and sat down for lunch.

The riders had worked up an appetite by covering between 20 and 15 miles depending on which route they had joined.

Collection

Then they all rode the five miles back to the park where it had started from.

Each rider paid a £2 subscription to

take part and took collection tins with them to raise funds for their chosen charity, The Samaritans.

BT phone engineer Andy Glazzard, aged 52, reckons he has ridden 15,000 miles since joining the group three years ago and has shed 3st in the process.

"We try to put something back into the community at the same time as we are enjoying ourselves," he said.

"For instance we had 350 cyclists join us on a ride earlier this year that raised £4,000 for Diabetes UK."

CHRONICLE



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NEWS

in brief

Pharmacy to help with prescriptions

PLANS have been approved for a pharmacy for outpatient prescriptions to be built just outside Russells Hall Hospital.

Bosses say the new £227,000 pharmacy will help to reduce the wait for patients to receive medicines.

Staff will also have more time to help patients understand prescriptions, as well as offer counselling services and there will be a service to deliver specialist medicines direct to homes.

Planning permission for the pharmacy, which is expected to be open from a daily basis from 9am to 7pm, has been granted by Dudley Council.

Retail firms show interest in store

A LARGE store left empty in Dudley by the closure of a food supermarket has attracted interest from independent and national retail companies.

The Co-op Food store in Fisher Street closed on November 16. Nearly 30 workers at the store lost their jobs due to a decision to close because of 'poor trading performance'. The shop, which is connected to Farmfoods, has received interest. Ben Taylor, from marketing firm Innes England, said: "We have had a couple of enquiries from independent and national companies that are looking to locate in the town."

Waste firm sees permit revoked

A WASTE firm which had been ordered to clear a towering pile of rubbish will no longer be able to operate the site after its environmental permit was revoked.

Refuse Derived Fuel Ltd, in Brierley Hill, has already been banned from receiving more waste as it works to clear the backlog.

But now the Environment Agency has removed the company's authorisation to operate the site and served the firm a notice, which says all remaining waste must be moved from the site by February 17.

Summer flights to Cornish resort

BUDGET airline Flybe is launching a new daily service between Birmingham and Newquay in Cornwall as part of its summer 2014 schedule. Flights are available to book now at www.flybe.com for flights from May 16 to September 9 next year.

NEWS FEATURE

IN MY VIEW

WITH
MARK
ANDREWS

MOST bizarre story of the last week comes courtesy of Birmingham City Council, which will in future be requiring buskers to go through an audition process before they are allowed to ply their trade outside Snow Hill station.

I can see where the good burghers of Brum are coming from. I once worked in an office where the summer months meant a daily choice between stifling humidity, or opening a window directly above the wailing banshee on the street below. Usually we opted for stifling humidity, air fresheners were cheaper than earplugs.

But since when did local government become a leading authority on musical talent? You can imagine them now, all sat around the committee room table, sucking on their spectacles.

"Councillor Benson, you've got the high-waisted trousers, you can be Simon Cowell. Mr Jackson, you've done a few shifts on hospital radio, you're Louis Walsh."

"Oh, and Betty. You're good with the tea and biscuits, and your old man's a driving instructor, isn't he? Do you fancy being that bird with the funny name?"

"Great, all sorted. So tell us Mr Millichip, why are you here?"

□□□□□

HEARTWARMING tale about the 97-year-old Sid Ratcliffe, who married 90-year-old Iris Law at Wolverhampton Register Office last week.

There are probably cynics around who will say that the age gap is too big, and that Sid was looking for a young trophy wife. But wisely, the couple have been courting since 2001, so they haven't rushed into it.

You know they must have something special when they can bring a smile to the face of even a curmudgeonly old cynic like myself. Can't wait for the golden wedding.

□□□□□

THE report about the maggots at the doctor's surgery in Nottingham is horrifying, but equally I do think we place far too much emphasis on the fabric of buildings when it comes to the NHS.

Years ago, when I went to my GP, it would be in a small, slightly shabby surgery, where you could get an appointment in the evening, and you stood a good chance of seeing the same doctor every time you went.

Then along came a spot of the fabled 'investment', and the old surgery made way for a shiny new mini-clinic with a spacious waiting room, baby-changing facilities, specialist treatment rooms and around 20 staff. Last time I tried to make an appointment I was told it would have to be the following week – and I had no idea who I would see. I think I preferred things the way they were.

Follow me on Twitter MAn-drews_Star



Father Christmas greets Oliver Marple at the Birches Valley grotto in Rugeley



Santa, Lisa Walker and daughter Tahliya, aged two, in the Merry Hill grotto



Betty Green, aged six, meets Santa in his grotto at Sandwell Park Farm



Harry, three and Abigail, nine, Cyster meet Santa at the Victorian Arcade

It's a lotta grotto fun as children enjoy Santa visit

NOTHING says Christmas quite like a trip to Santa's grotto. Excited youngsters flock to see Father Christmas and tell him exactly what they want on the big day.

Increasing numbers of attractions across the country now offer their own Santa's grottos.

Some, like at Staffordshire's Shugborough Hall, are so popular that tickets to see Santa sell out weeks in advance. Others see queues build up of youngsters eager to pass on their wish lists.

For children, it is often one of the highlights of the festive period.

Some grottos offer youngsters a small memento of their visit, while others give children the chance to have their pictures taken with the man in the red suit.

Shops and department stores first started offering their own grottos more than a century ago.

The tradition of Santa making special appearances at department stores and shopping centres in the run up to Christmas was started by James Edgar who introduced it in 1890 to his Massachusetts department store.

Glimpse

The practice was first seen in Great Britain in 1879 before spreading the following year to Australia and America.

It is believed the first ever department store Christmas grotto was in Liverpool at the Lewis's Bon Marche store, which opened as 'Christmas Fairytale' in 1879.

Today, it is commonplace for department stores to have their own grottos.

Set within the 11th century Dudley Castle, a visit to the grotto at the town's zoo also includes a glimpse inside Sleeping Beauty's Palace.

Before meeting Father Christmas, children can look around the castle, which has been transformed with an animal forest, an antique spinning wheel and Princess Beauty asleep in a bed. Visitors are greeted by an elf before being taken into a warm room to meet the big man and receive a special gift.

Following the visit, families can view a glow in the dark puppet show before seeing the zoo's many animals.

Among the visitors so far are pupils and teachers from Lightwoods Primary



Santa in the grotto at Dudley Zoo and Castle with Lightwoods Primary pupils



At the Mander Centre grotto are Shayla-Mai Bratt, aged two, and dad John

School in Oldbury. Reception teacher Sarah Cawtheray said: "I think it is a great grotto for the children to visit and get presents to take home."

Youngsters can sit alongside Santa on a small chair while they make their wishlist, or on request, can sit on his lap and have their pictures taken.

The grotto is open from 10am to 3.30pm every day. Tickets are purchased for 30-minute time slots. For children, it costs £9.50. For adults, it is £6.50.

A family ticket for two adults and two children costs £28.

At Merry Hill, the adventure takes

youngsters on a journey with Elbow the Elf who, with the help of a snowman, makes sure their presents reach them despite the efforts of 'Fumble the Bad Elf'.

Children and their families first go through to a mini cinema, where they don 'magic' glasses to watch a 5D film of the story – complete with wind, lights and elf dust.

And the children's photographs, taken as they queue, are already included in the film on screen. A photo with Santa himself – and a present – complete the experience. Entry costs £2.50 for adults,

£4.95 per child and £12 for two adults with two children.

The children's fee includes a 50p charity donation to 'Help Harry Help Others'. The grotto is open on Saturdays from 10am to 7pm; Sundays from 10.30am to 5pm; weekdays until December 18 from 10am to 8pm; December 19, 20, 21 and 23 from 10am to 9pm and Christmas Eve from 9am to 5pm.

A wooden chalet-style grotto at Wolverhampton's Mander Centre is nestled on the bottom floor of the shopping centre. Among those who queued to pay him a visit was eight-year-old Blade Wraxton, who said: "Santa was really nice. I give it 10 out of 10."

Santa charges £4.25 for a present, £4 for a photo and £8 for a present and photo.

Set in the picturesque Cannock Chase, this grotto offers an authentic woodland.

Young children are given a Christmas tree sapling to plant as well as a soft toy.

Reindeer can also be found close by, grazing in their forest enclosure.

Reindeer

Angela Marple, who took sons Oliver and Joshua along with husband Nathan said: "We think it is the best grotto in the Midlands. It looks a bit like Lapland without the snow."

Entry costs £6 per child and on Friday from 4pm to 7pm and Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 4pm.

A winter wonderland of penguins, polar bears and reindeer greet visitors to Santa's grotto at Sandwell Park Farm.

One of the first things children spy is a sleigh, which leads into Santa's workshop where they can meet the man himself and receive a gift.

Entry costs £6 on top of the normal £9.10 admission fee for adults and £1.40 for children. The grotto is open every weekend until December 22 from 10am to 4.30pm. Group bookings are available by calling 0121 553 0220.

Father Christmas sits on a huge gold-coloured chair as he greets children at the Victorian Arcade in Bradford Street, Walsall. An empty unit at the shopping centre has been transformed into a festive wonderland, with decorations and stockings lining the walls.

The Winter Wonderland is located between The Works and Acorns Charity Shop. Entry is £2.50 per child.

THROUGH THE YEARS

1983...

WOLVERHAMPTON Grand Theatre had welcomed 80,000 people through its doors since in the three months since it reopened. Chairman of the theatre board Geoffrey Norman said it had helped bring people into the city centre at night, and dispelled the myth that it was a 'no-go' area after dark.

A VICAR scrapped most of the Christmas celebrations at his church in protest at the modern trappings of the festive season. Christ Church in Lye would have no Nativity play or carol service, announced vicar Rev Graham Cooper, instead focusing on special New Year's Day services.

MEANWHILE, Father Christmas nearly failed to turn up for a function at an old people's home in Oldbury because a bus driver left him stranded.

1993...

BRITISH Prime Minister John Major and his Eire counterpart Albert Reynolds were on the brink of signing an historic declaration designed to bring peace to Northern Ireland. The agreement would have paved the way for Sinn Fein being allowed to take part in talks on the future of Ulster – to the fury of many Unionists.

THREE Britons were freed from prison by Saddam Hussein following the intervention of former prime minister Sir Edward Heath. The men had been given long sentences for illegally entering Iraq, but the British Government insisted no deals had been done to secure their release.

THE threat of fascism hung over Russia after the far-right Liberal Democrats achieved the biggest share of the vote in the parliamentary elections, taking 70 seats.

2003...

DEPOSED Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was finally captured by US forces after eight months on the run. The dishevelled-looking dictator was shown on television, sporting a long, grey beard, but was said to be in good health. Saddam had not been seen since the invasion led by British and American forces in April.

THE jury in the Soham murder trial was sent out to consider its verdict. Ian Huntley, a 29-year-old school caretaker, denied murdering 10-year-olds Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman. His fiancee, Maxine Carr, a 26-year-old classroom assistant, denied conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

VETERAN rocker Mick Jagger was at Buckingham Palace to receive his knighthood - but in the true spirit of rock 'n' roll rebellion, he wore trainers with his lounge suit.

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LETTERS

Ambulance staff call for support

WEST Midlands Ambulance Service staff feel downtrodden, bullied and are treated with no respect by their employers, who are trying to reduce their pay and change working practices to the detriment of staff.

We are the people you call when you are injured or sick. We care about you and for you. Do you care about us? It is clear our employers don't.

Our pay is made up of a basic salary and an uplift for working anti-social hours, essentially nights and weekends. This uplift is up to 25 per cent. This is different to the way the rest of the NHS is paid for anti-social working and is cheaper for our employers. Our employers are currently trying to remove this uplift from our sick pay.

We do have a higher incidence of sickness than other groups of workers, which shouldn't be a surprise as we

come into contact with sick people many times every shift.

Our job can be extremely stressful. This stress is increased by the attitudes of our management. We are now going to be expected to work until we are 67. Do you want a 67-year-old driving an ambulance under emergency conditions or carrying you downstairs on a carry chair?

We drive using blue lights and sirens, putting ourselves at risk, to patient after patient, even though most of them are stable and in no real danger.

During a 12 hour shift I get one 30 minute unpaid break (some get 45 minutes, it depends which area you work in). This can be eight hours into the shift, or even more when busy. I get that break at my base station, the same place I start and finish.

Ambulance staff feel undervalued

and morale is incredibly low. Our management seem to have forgotten that what we do is the reason the service exists and all other areas should be supporting us in delivering excellent care to our patients.

If you want to know how staff feel take a look at www.ambbowm.freefo.runs.net

If you think we deserve to be treated fairly contact West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust by going to www.wmas.nhs.uk/Pages/TalkToUs.aspx and filling in the form or write to: Millennium Point, Waterfront Business Park, Waterfront Way, Brierley Hill DY5 1LX.

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LETTERS

to the Editor

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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

E-MAIL

Dudley.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

Gas guzzlers are let off the hook by new move to scrap paper tax disc

I SEE that in his autumn statement the Chancellor George Osborne intends to scrap the paper road tax disc in October next year.

This, he says, has been made possible by the introduction of the ENPR – the electronic number plate recognition system. This innovative new system will enable motorists to pay their road tax by direct debit, very laudable I'm sure.

However I can't help wondering why he couldn't adopt the far easier option of simply adding the road tax to the price of petrol at the pumps, as has been mooted many times in the past.

Could it possibly be that by doing that, that his wealthy cronies with their gas guzzling Range Rovers, Rollers, Bentleys, Jags, etc, would pay more than the ordinary run of the mill motorist in their small and economical-to-run Fiesta, Micro or Mini?

Perish the thought; surely no self respecting chancellor would take advantage of his position to protect the wealthy at the expense of the less wealthy in our society, would they?

Also, what about the motorists who do not have the means to set up direct debit payments. Not everyone has, or indeed desires to have, a bank account – after all, their credibility has dipped dramatically in recent years.

Of one thing we can rest assured, the treasury's cash cow – hard-pressed motorist – can expect no respite from any chancellor, present or future.

B PARSONS
Millard Road
Coseley

MR J A HUNT
Dibdale Street
Dudley

England lost MP pay rise – for what?

I ENJOYED reading the Memory Lane article by Daniel Wainwright on December 12. The historic match memento was really interesting.

However, the statement under the centre picture should read: 'Wright and Ferenc Puskas hand over mementoes before England went on to LOSE 6-3.'

It was the first time England had been defeated at Wembley by a foreign team. The return match in Budapest was even more of a disaster, s England were thrashed 7-1.

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MEMORY LANE

The bus in service when it was running during 1952 in West Bromwich



Empty shell – the vehicle just before its restoration



Gordon Ibbotson who worked on the restoration on the bus with curator Janet Small

It was restoration or bus-t as GEA 174 gets new lease of life

IT HAS been a 20-year labour of love. But for transport enthusiasts, the efforts to restore an old double-decker bus have been worth it.

And now volunteers are ready to hop on board to showcase their work to visitors to the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley.

A £40,000 restoration project has been carried out by members of the transport group at the museum to give the bus a new lease of life.

The team will be proudly relaunching the GEA174 double-decker bus which was originally bought by West Bromwich Corporation in 1952 as part of a fleet of 20 before the local transport system was taken into private hands.

by Andrew Turton

The bus was used on the route 74 between Birmingham, West Bromwich and Dudley, but it was withdrawn in 1969.

The vehicle was then donated to Dudley Libraries and was kept stored in the former Midland Red garage in Wolverhampton.

In the museum's early years it was used to collect items – including Emile Doo's chemist from Netherton which now stands proudly on the museum's Canal Street.

Permanently

By 1980 bus GEA 174 had moved permanently to the museum but as a kit broken into parts after a series of unsuccessful restoration attempts.

Now, with funds raised by the group and particularly a bequest from Arthur Whitehouse, and a

team led by Gordon Ibbotson, the bus has been restored to its glory days and is ready to take on a new generation of passengers.

There has been a full engine refurbishment, the brakes have been overhauled, side panels have been replaced along with the flooring and replacement window.

The radiator, which had several holes, has also been repaired and re-chromed and the exhaust has been replaced to get the bus back on the road again.

Janet Small, who is the curator for industry and transport at the museum, said: "Creating the moquette for the seats was a painstaking process but it was all worth it."

"It was made by Holdsworth in Meltham, Derbyshire; the same company that created the leather trimming for the seats, in the same colour used in the Triumph Stag."

Finally, the bus was brush painted and transfers made and applied in-house to give it a finished off look for visitors to enjoy.

The costs were paid for by funds raised by the group and with the support of local companies offering discounts or not charging for small fixings.

The restored bus will now be taken out to a number of shows in the future as well as being used in order to help promote the museum.

Mr Ibbotson added: "It has been a true team effort with members of the Transport Group and many others contributing at each stage of the long restoration."

The restored bus GEA 174 can be seen by visitors to the museum on Transport Group days, usually on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

For more information about the bus and the museum then visit www.bclm.co.uk.



Gordon Ibbotson who worked on the restoration of the 1950s bus

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Double awards joy for club and coach



The team behind Kewford Eagles, including Jennie Price, right



Student Alex Giles

THEY were named the cream of the Black Country but now a football club and a sports coach are celebrating even more success.

Kewford Eagles Football Club and college student Alex Giles were both winners in the Black Country Sport and Physical Activity Awards.

Now they have made it a double by picking up the Community Club of The Year and the Further Education Sport Student Role Model of the Year, respectively, at the West Midlands Community Sports Awards.

The winners, both from Dudley, collected their awards in front of 320 people at a ceremony at Villa Park, hosted by BBC Midlands Today presen-

ters Nick Owen and Mary Rhodes. They were joined by members of Team GB and Paralympics GB sport stars including Wolverhampton Olympic hero Kristian Thomas.

Judges selected Kewford Eagles for its work within the community. It is the largest club in the West Midlands and in Birmingham County FA.

Alex, aged 23, was praised after a completing an extended diploma in sport, as well as several coaching awards at Dudley College. He has acted as class representative and was a key figure in the college's buddy programme motivating and supporting young people facing difficulties.

Simon Hall, director of the Black Country BeActive Partnership, a partner of the awards, said: "We wish our finalists every success."

Investment of 130m to create thousands of jobs

A £130 MILLION private investment which will create thousands of jobs is 'the beginning of a new era of growth and prosperity' for the Black Country, says Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg.

The Mp announced the City Deal, which is expected to create 5,800 manufacturing jobs in the next four years to benefit Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall.

The cash will be secured through investment by businesses in the West Midlands and further afield. It will be used to help regenerate key sites across the Black Country, although officials have yet to reveal exactly which locations.

The deal will also see 2,800 long-term unemployed people receive 'intensive' support to help get them back into work. Bosses hope that 900 of them will be helped into work.

The new Black Country Growth Factory is being set up with £3.1m of support to boost existing local businesses. It will provide an online portal for local businesses to access local and national support services, including specialist support to small businesses in the high-value manufac-

Santa swaps sleigh for chairlift

DUDLEY Zoo's vintage chairlift has passed its first post-relaunch health and safety inspection with flying colours – and who better to test the festive flying machine than Father Christmas!

Since reopening last summer, following a £117,000 Heritage Lottery funded refurbishment after a ten-year absence, the ride has been a popular addition to the site.

Rebuilt

Zoo chief executive Peter Suddock said: "This was the first annual service of the chairlift since it was rebuilt and with 80 per cent of all height-compatible visitors using



Father Christmas tries out the landmark chairlift at Dudley Zoo ready for its relaunch

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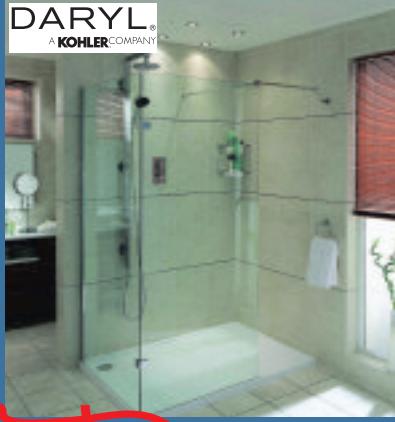
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Winter wonderland for Mason



Melodie Williams, 41, has made it a special illuminated Christmas in Rowley Regis for her three-year-old son Mason Williams, who she is holding, and for his siblings Dominic, aged 4, Sadie, 11, and Harmonie Williams, 6.

LOVING mother Melodie Williams from Rowley Regis had only one wish this year, to create a winter wonderland that her seriously ill three-year-old son Mason would remember

"They all said they had a wonderful time."

Young Mason was born with a condition commonly known as having 'half a heart' - Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome (HLHS).

Rare

The condition occurs in one out of 4,344 births and expectations are that 70 per cent of those with HLHS will reach adulthood.

Mason also has a rare condition called micro deletion, which means he is missing genes and has a delay in his development.

Mason has already undergone two big operations to 're-plumb' his heart, but due to pressures in his lungs he is currently unable to have the final stage of the procedure.

The family have been told that if his condition does not improve, or he does not continue to grow, within 12 months

he will not be able to have the operation.

His full-time carer mum added: "If he had the operation today he wouldn't survive... We wanted to make this Christmas really memorable for everyone. If Mason can't have his operation, there's a chance he may not be here next year, so it had to be extra special."

"This is the best Christmas present we as a family could have ever asked for."

Friends, families and businesses rallied round to lend their support and make her vision became a reality to delight little Mason.

Despite the fact he is partially-sighted, Mason enjoys lights and it this inspired the idea for the display.

"Mason wasn't very well on the night and couldn't really enjoy it, but we will keep the house lit up for the rest of Christmas for him to enjoy," Mrs Williams added.

Dozens of volunteers all joined in to help put up dazzling displays which have illuminated the family's home and garden in Rowley Regis.

Mrs Williams said: "It was absolutely brilliant to see the house lit up... We had so many people who had helped turn up to see the lights and the road was full of cars."

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NEWS

Iconic building restored at town centre gateway

IT WAS once a busy department store which welcomed generations of shoppers. Now the building has been restored to its 1930s glory as part of a £600,000 revamp project.

The wraps have been taken off the old Co-operative store in Dudley High Street following the six-month scheme.

The striking building dates back to 1939, having been designed by Dudley-based architects Webb and Gray and built by Dudley contractor, Mark Round and Sons. It was originally faced in eye-catching cream and blue tiles, made by the Stourbridge Glazed Brick Company.

Significant

Restoration work on the building, now home to Blunts, included repairing the leaking roof, renewing the metal-framed windows – a significant feature of the building – and renewing the original fascias.

The original tiles and coping stones remaining on the building have been cleaned and repaired.

Councillor Judy Foster, cabinet member for regeneration at Dudley Council, said: "This work ensures the gateway into the town at the top of the High Street is vastly improved for the town's residents, visitors and businesses.

"The restoration has been



Councillors Khurshid Ahmed and Judy Foster, front right, with workers at the restored building sensitively carried out and it is exciting to see this wonderful building brought back to life as part of the council's ongoing commitment to improve the town's buildings and environment."

Transportation boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said: "We are delighted with the end result and thank motorists for their patience while the one-way system was in place."

The work was completed through Dudley Council's Townscape Heritage Initiative, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and the Housing and Communities Agency.

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NEWS

Sisters doing it for themselves



Hairdressing sisters Natalie Burton, 32, of Woodcross, and Steph Haynes, 26, of Sedgley, cut the ribbon to open their salon watched by well-wishers

ONE has been hairdressing since she left college. The other has recently qualified after 13 years working for a logistics company.

Now sisters Stephanie Haynes and Natalie Burton have decided to launch their own salon together in Dudley. They cut the ribbon at Scissor Sisters in Woodcross, between Coseley and Sedgley, with a champagne opening attended by friends and family.

Miss Haynes, aged 26, of Rowan Road, Sedgley, previously worked at Sharon's Salon in Dudley, while Mrs Burton, 32, of Stretton Place, continues to work part-time at Culina Logistics in Wolverhampton.

Encouraged

Mother-of-one Miss Haynes said: "I have said from when I first started that I would love my own shop but you never think at the age of 26 it would be possible."

"It's very daunting. Natalie has always been interested when I've been doing it and she always wanted to go into it I think."

"We went to an open day and she ended up enrolling and it went from there."

She added: "I have been encouraged for a while by my mum and dad and then my sister started to do it last year."

The Turner Avenue salon in Woodcross, opened to the public last week. Miss Haynes and Mrs Burton have spent around £6,000 refurbishing the premises and ordering stock.

The revamp has included repainting the building and installing new flooring.

Miss Haynes said: "We have had to do a lot. When we had it at first it was basically just a shell. There wasn't any plumbing or anything. We have totally changed it."

The former High Arcal School pupil added: "It feels fantastic to have got to this stage."

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Sedgley

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Open 10:00-14:00

Lloyds Pharmacy

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Off Little Cottage Street

Brierley Hill, DY5 1RG

Tel: 01384 485085

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Lye, Stourbridge

DY9 8LQ

Tel: 01384 898400

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Brierley Hill, Dudley

DY5 1QT

Tel: 01384 74177

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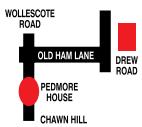
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NEWS

Magic numbers for Anneliese



Parents Jack Lambert and Cindy Richards, of California Road, Tividale, with Anneliese Clare Lambert – born weighing 8 lbs at 9:10 pm on 11-12-13

ANNELIESE Clare Lambert definitely has a way with numbers.

When the baby girl made her arrival into the world it was perfectly timed. She was born weighing just over 8lbs, at 9.10pm on December 11, 2013, so she has the numbers 8, 9,10,11,12,13 in numerical order associated with her birth.

Although they were aware of the significance of the date, proud parents Cindy Richards and Jack Lambert from Tividale did not realise what had happened at first until a midwife pointed out her time of arrival and sequence of the numbers.

Lottery

Anneliese who was born at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley, has a five-year-old brother Tyler and a four-year-old sister Tiffanie, who are delighted to have a younger sister.

Their proud grandmother Barbara King, of Walsall, said she was shocked when she found out the number sequence: "It was amazing when we realised, I couldn't believe it. What are the chances of that happening?"

"I'm going to use the numbers as lottery numbers because they must be lucky."

"Anneliese is lovely, she's a little bruiser," she said.

The newborn's date of birth was also special because December 11 2013 or 11/12/13 was the last date this century with three consecutive numbers.

There are only a handful of them every 100 years making them extra special for anyone born on those days.

The next time a consecutive date will occur in the calendar is on February 1, 2103 or 1/02/03. The last two consecutive days were November 10, 2012 or 10/11/12 and October 9, 2011 or 9/10/11.

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NEWS**NEWS
in brief**

Seven dwarfs get chop from panto
A TRIO of actors have conquered a numbers problem in their production of Snow White by deleting the roles of the seven dwarfs. Under a storyline adapted by the Funtime Theatre for the classic pantomime, the seven characters have been captured by the Wicked Queen.

"It is the only way we can perform the pantomime with so few people," said actor Rachel Coleman, a former High Arcal School student who set the company up with fellow actor Will Phipps. James Totney will also feature in their panto performance, which takes place at the Wacky Warehouse at the One and Two Halves in Joseph Street, Oldbury on Sunday at 3pm.

Spring tour plan at maternity unit

VISITORS will be given an insight into maternity and neonatal services when bosses at Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust provide a tour of the recently refurbished midwife-led unit.

It takes place on March 13. Places need to be booked on 01384 321124.

Helpline to close for festive period

A SERVICE providing lifts for people needing help to get to medical and dental appointments has announced its festive period closing times.

Hagley Helpline will close its office at 12 noon on tomorrow, reopening on January 2.

Taxi drivers force a U-turn over white car colour rule

TAXI drivers are celebrating a 'landmark victory' after overturning a rule forcing them to use only white-coloured private hire cabs.

Dudley Council brought in the regulation for the single colour scheme to improve safety for residents in 2006 but the move has proved unpopular with the drivers.

They have campaigned against the regulation, claiming the rising cost of white-coloured cars was putting them out of business.

At a meeting of Dudley Council's taxis committee last week, councillors agreed to drop the colour rule. The change, coming into force in June, will also see new signage on side doors to identify the vehicles as taxis.

Safety

Shaz Saleem, chairman of Dudley Private Hire and Taxi Association, said: "It is a landmark decision. It has been a tough, long campaign and we are finally there. This is about keeping taxi drivers in business and raising public safety."

Mr Saleem, also managing director at Sedgley-based Beacon Taxis and Express Taxis in Halesowen, added: "Having to be in white cars is expensive for respraying and buying of the cars. The new signage will make it clear for customers on what is a taxi and what is not."

The decision marks a U-turn for the committee, which refused to amend the policy on March 13.

Drivers took part in a go-slow protest through Dudley town centre as part of their campaign.

Crooks' cash will help to fight crime

CASH seized from criminals is being ploughed back into the community with more than £91,000 going to groups and initiatives.

The money has been raised through the sale of assets under the Proceeds of Crime Act and is being invested into 15 schemes and organisations in the West Midlands.

Schemes to receive money include a £13,000 retail radio digital upgrade for Dudley town centre and £10,000 for mobile phone bungee cords for distribution by officers at events in Wolverhampton, where there have been reported thefts.

The Haven Refuge has been awarded more than £1,000 to support its youth provision on a Welsh farm estate. A number of other schemes to help youngsters turn away from a life of crime have been supported.

Hello tiger! Big cats get to nose each other



Male Sumatran tiger Joao, left, and female Daseep meet for the first time at Dudley Zoo, where there are high hopes the pair will mate as there are fewer than 140 Sumatran Tigers survive in the wild

THEY rubbed noses as they said a friendly hello to each other for the first time. It is the start of a budding new relationship for rare Sumatran tigers Daseep and Joao at Dudley Zoo.

Twenty-one-month-old male Joao, who arrived from Krefeld Zoo in Germany last month, has been slowly introduced to three-year-old Daseep at the internal dens over four weeks.

But last week big cat keepers decided the time was right for their first proper meeting and it was a huge success with the tigers keen to get to know one another and explore their new surroundings in the Tecton enclosure.

Keepers hope that if their relationship continues to blossom, they will be hearing the pitter-patter of little paws. Zoo head of media and communica-

tions Jill Hitchman said: "The introduction went like a dream, we couldn't have asked for better. Since his arrival last month we've monitored Joao very closely and given the two of them plenty of space to get used to each other.

"They both seem very comfortable with each other and are busy exploring the outdoor enclosure and den together."

Drug case judge asks man to show his accounts

A SELF-EMPLOYED businessman found with £1,100 worth of cocaine and a set of scales in his car has been ordered to produce his accounts in court because a district judge suspects he may be a drug dealer.

William Griffin, 26, of Market Street, Kingswinford, admitted having the cocaine, although he has not been charged with supplying the drug.

Rehabilitation

But District Judge Graham Wilkin said the fact that a set of scales, two mobile phones and the cocaine were found by police in his car in Wordsley at 6.25pm on September 13 led to the conclusion he may be dealing drugs.

The judge also said the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) should be notified that Griffin was taking drugs and should not be behind the wheel of a car.

Mr Dennis Dudley, defending, said: "His house was searched very thoroughly but no drug paraphernalia was found."

Griffin had been attending a drug rehabilitation programme but went back on drugs after being charged with robbery last year.

The case against him had collapsed when the complainant said that a car he was accused of taking had already been stolen, said Mr Dudley.

The judge said he wanted to see Griffin's business accounts before he is sentenced on January 8. Griffin was allowed unconditional bail.

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saw the opening of Play Box Pre-School

situated at Wall Heath Community Centre which offers morning sessions on a Monday to Friday for 2-4 year olds.



Toddler Room

headed by owners Debbie and her son Rob Mason along with managers Lianne Hayes and Naomi Paterson who have a wealth of experience over the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have overseen the growth of the business over the years which now sees them employing nineteen staff with the view to employing more people at the new site.

FREE CHILDCARE

Debbie commented "Nursery Education Funding offers up to 15 hours free childcare for children aged between 3 and 4 and we are delighted to be able to offer parents in the area another site to consider bringing their

children to."

The new nursery will be open from 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday catering for 0 to 5 year olds which means we can be flexible with our childcare. We can cater for parents who work on shift patterns and due to our close proximity to Russells Hall Hospital this will be ideal for hospital staff as well as other people who do not work set hours every week.



Sensory Room

have a Baby Room, Toddler Room, Pre-School Room, Physical Room, Creative Room and Sensory Room. We will also have an outside play area ready by Spring."

NEW NURSERY

The Play Box motto has always been "The place where children Learn to Play and Play to Learn" and this will continue more than ever next year with the opening of the new nursery.

For further information on vacancies you can contact Rob on 01384 835535 or email him at enquiries@playboxnurseries.co.uk

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Roof firm pair guilty of preying on retired couple

THEY preyed on a retired couple, using aggressive sales tactics to get them to sign up to work costing almost £3,000.

Their victims were pressured to put their signature to paper and told if they did not do so immediately then they would lose a discount totalling thousands of pounds.

The work they offered came with a promise that painting the roof would reduce a loss in heating of up to 40 per cent – but neither the salesman or company boss could prove the figure was correct.

Last week boss Edward Hogan and salesman Stewart Fawke, from Roofguard Protective Coatings Limited, were together found guilty of 12 charges after a trial at Dudley Magistrates' Court.

Coercion

The pair were caught when trading standards officers from Dudley Council turned up at the home of the victims in Halesowen as the company began £2,883 worth of work.

Finding them guilty, Mrs Anne Robinson, chairman of the bench, said: "We find that the sales process as a whole together with the disparity between quoted costs of works a deliberate, well orchestrated course of action designed to exert undue influence, coercion and harassment."

The trial heard how Fawke, aged 46, of Shirley Road, Birmingham, had visited the couple's address and shown a leaflet and DVD which made a claim that the paint could save up to 40 per cent heat loss. He quoted them a price of £5,115. But he then dropped the price to £2,883.

Mrs Robinson said: "The quotation



Company boss Eddie Hogan, left, and salesman Stewart Fawke leaving court in Dudley

gave misleading and false information designed to induce the customer to sign the contract immediately."

The trial heard how Hogan, 56, of Chapel Street in Derby, was responsible for the leaflet, as owner of the company. In interview, he said he relied on information given by the roof product supplier.

Fawke was found guilty of two charges of fraud by false representation. Hogan was found guilty of two counts aiding and abetting a dishonest failure to disclose information.

The pair were found guilty of three counts of engaging in a commercial practice which is a misleading action containing false information and one count of engaging in a commercial practice which was aggressive.

Both were cleared on one charge of engaging in a commercial practice which is a misleading action containing false information.

The firm, based in Derby, was found guilty of two counts of fraud by false representation, three counts engaging in a commercial practice which is a misleading action containing false information and three counts of engaging in a commercial practice which was aggressive.

The firm had entered a guilty plea on one charge of engaging in a commercial practice which is a misleading action containing false information.

Sentencing is due on February 25.

Officers may have to film stop search procedures

OFFICERS could be made to wear cameras to monitor how they carry out controversial stop-and-search procedures as part of new proposals being considered by West Midlands Police.

The public are being asked for their views on a number of new proposals aimed at improving the force's relationship with residents and boosting its reputation.

Trust

Other proposals include mandatory stop-and-search training for all frontline police officers, a social media campaign informing people about their rights and greater use of stop-and-search scrutiny panels.

Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands Bob Jones said: "The power of stop-and-search is a controversial issue for our police officers."

"Many communities support stop-and-search as they believe it has a key role in intercepting people carrying knives, guns and stolen goods."

"On the other hand if it's done badly it can, very much, undermine relationships and the trust of the



Fundraiser Kenneth Peel

TRIBUTES have been paid to popular community figure and fundraiser Kenneth Peel, who has died aged 77.

He raised money for Wolverhampton Coronary After Care Support Group and St Thomas's Community Network, a charity learning centre in Dudley.

The West Bromwich Albion fan was also company secretary for AFR Godfrey Ltd and liquidators assistant at Muras Baker and Jones.

Crime level data could be listed, allowing people to compare the rate of stop-and-search checks with the number of offences.

The deadline for response to the plan is tomorrow.

The survey is available on the Police and Crime Commissioner's website.

New skills help apprentices prosper

YOUNG apprentices have scooped honours to celebrate gaining new skills on the first step of their new careers.

They were given their chance by Dudley-based engineering firm Beck Prosper Ltd, which hosted the training scheme.

A range of skills in team leadership, customer service and business administration were taught during the course. The students also discovered more about a career in the engineering industry as part of the project.

College

It was run jointly by Performance Through People training provider, Halesowen College and Lean Engineering and Manufacturing Academy.

Among those who took a starring role was Russell Dean and Verity Lees.

She said: "It was a fantastic opportunity to be able to undertake the Diploma in Customer Service, and we have to give our thanks to our assessor Sue Mills from Performance through People, who was fantastic throughout, we would never have made it without her."

Chris Morris, Training Manager at Beck Prosper, told the apprentices: "I know you are all proud of your qualification achievements, and I know how challenging some of you found them."

"I know from experience how daunting it can be to go back into education but you have done it and this award is a chance for me, your managers and your tutors to reflect their pride in you."



From left to right, back, Russell Dean, Dean Longden, Luke Smith, Managing Director Martin Boulter, Aaron Boffey, Nicole Pemberton, Craig Cooper, Ross Webb, Alan Simpson, Louise McColgan, Laura Underhill, Michaela Samuel, and Verity Lees

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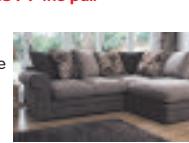
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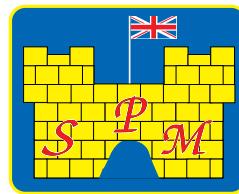
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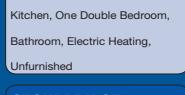
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REVIEW

It's squeaky fun time with crazy Joe in the Grand's fabulous panto



All of a Muddles for Joe Pasquale as the best friend of the Princess Beauty with Ceri Dupree as Queen Passionella



Curtain call or curtain fall? Joe Pasquale gets in a tangle as Muddles in the Grand's pantomime Sleeping Beauty

Sleeping Beauty, Wolverhampton Grand

SLEEPING BEAUTY ticks all the boxes for panto fun... a beautiful princess, a handsome prince, a king, a queen, a couple of faeries and, best of all, clown prince of comedy Joe Pasquale.

The Grand's 119th birthday could hardly have been celebrated in better style than having the theatre packed with a family audience laughing at the madcap antics of anarchic Joe in a glittering, action-packed pantomime.

Giggles

Make no mistake, Joe as Muddles is the star of the show, merciless in his wind-ups of the other actors as he goes eyeball to eyeball with them to provoke fits of giggles, creating his own turkey-suited superhero and even getting stuck to and elevated by the stage curtain.

There is some plot stuff about him being unable to tell the Princess Beauty that he loves her – the love that dare not squeak its name? – but it's all just an excuse for Pasquale to do what he does so well, being very daft indeed.

An unfortunate accident with a sharp screw and a revolving chair takes his high voice to chipmunk levels, and he leaves the stage to tease the front row before falling into the orchestra pit. But he is probably at his best reacting to the children brought onto the stage for the inevitable Music Man finale.

It's no one man show though, fine support comes from dazzling Dame Ceri Dupree as Queen Passionella,

sporting increasingly bizarre gowns that not even Lady Gaga could top. My favourite was the one that, rather than just the feathers, appeared to have put an entire ostrich on top of her head, though the glitterball gown was pretty spectacular.

Pasquale even came on as Lady Gaga at one point but the impression of Tina Turner was more impressive. And despite Craig Revel-Horwood having dabs on the saying, Dupree made the word 'faaaaabulous' her own catchphrase.

Former Coronation Street actress Lucy Evans and Oliver Watton from Hollyoaks, make a pleasant pairing as Princess Beauty and Prince Daniel. Poor Oliver will be a stone heavier by the end of the run if Pasquale keeps stuffing his face with chocolate bars.

Wendy Somerville as evil fairy Carabosse and Michael Peluso as her green-skinned sidekick son Slimeball are very hissable.

Robyn Mellor as the good fairy Enchantress has the best song, Wicked's Defying Gravity, during which Pasquale does indeed defy gravity on a flying motorbike over the heads of audience members in the stalls, on his way to save the princess sent to sleep by pricking her finger on a cursed spinning wheel. It is an impressive effect using similar technology to the flying car in stage versions of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Certainly no one in the audience will be sleeping during Sleeping Beauty, not only will the very loud live band keep them awake, so will the gales of laughter sparked by Pasquale's fooolry.

Sleeping Beauty continues at the Grand until January 18.

Leon Burakowski



Coronation Street actress Lucy Evans as Princess Beauty in Sleeping Beauty at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre

CHRISTMAS TV

Matt Smith's last stand as the Doctor



Downton Christmas special



Danny Dyer joins EastEnders



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Christmas Eve

BBC 1



Edward is forced to make a confession in **Holby City**, 8.00pm

6.00 Breakfast 9.00 The Gruffalo (R) 9.30 A CBeebies Christmas Carol Adaptation of the Charles Dickens novel. 10.10 Sarah & Duck: Christmas Special 10.20 FILM: **The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause** (2006) Christmas fantasy comedy sequel, starring Tim Allen. ★★★ 11.45 Only Fools and Horses Part two of two. The Trotters arrive in America. (R) 1.10 BBC News 1.20 Regional News; Weather. 1.30 FILM: **The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe** (2005) Four children discover a secret entrance to a mystical land that an evil witch has cursed with perpetual winter. Fantasy adventure, starring Tilda Swinton and Georgie Henley. ★★★

BBC 2



Jo Brand Phill Jupitus and Brendan O'Carroll feature in **QI XL**, 9.00pm

6.00 This Is BBC 2 6.50 Natural World: Animal House (R) 7.50 FILM: **Herbie Rides Again** (1974) Disney comedy sequel, starring Helen Hayes. ★★★ 9.15 **Westminster Abbey** The choir prepares to sing at a papal Mass in St Peter's Basilica, Rome. (R) 10.15 FILM: **An American in Paris** (1951) Romantic musical, starring Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron. ★★★★ 12.05 FILM: **Splash!** (1984) Romantic fantasy comedy, with Tom Hanks and Daryl Hannah. ★★★ 1.50 FILM: **Guns and Dolls** (1955) A gambler tries to win the heart of a Salvation Army member, while his friend searches for somewhere to hold an illegal dice game. Musical, with Frank Sinatra and Marlon Brando. ★★★★

ITV



Priya tells David to call off the wedding in **Emmerdale**, 7.00pm

6.00 Daybreak 8.30 Lorraine 9.25 FILM: **The Christmas Takeover** (1998) A cold-hearted toy tycoon goes to the North Pole to drive Santa out of business, only to have a crisis of conscience. Comedy drama, starring Harry Hamlin and William Hootkins. ★★ 11.30 **Catchphrase** Revival of the game show, hosted by Stephen Mulhern. (R) 12.15 ITV News and Weather 12.30 Let's Do Christmas with **Gino & Mel** With singer Billy Ocean. Last in the series. 1.30 **Steppin' Out with Katherine Jenkins** A cabaret show with the classical singer and celebrity guests. (R) 2.45 **Gary Barlow: Journey to Afghanistan** The X Factor judge performs a concert for British troops at Camp Bastion. (R)

CH4



Chris O'Dowd, The IT Crowd Special: **The Internet Is Coming**, 9.00pm

6.20 **Wilde Stories** Animated version of The Selfish Giant. (R) 6.50 **Wilde Stories** (R) 7.15 **The Bear** Animation based on the Raymond Briggs tale. (R) 7.45 FILM: **The Nativity Story** (2006) Biblical drama, starring Keisha Castle-Hughes. ★★ 9.45 **The Big Bang Theory** Amy and Penny use Bernadette to spy on Leonard and Priya. (R) 10.15 **The Big Bang Theory** (R) 10.40 **The Simpsons** The family spends Christmas on a ranch. (R) 11.10 **The Simpsons** (R) 11.40 **The Simpsons** (R) 12.10 **Deal or No Deal: Ideal Christmas** Noel Edmonds hosts a festive-themed edition. 1.10 FILM: **A Wonderful Life** (1946) Fantasy drama, starring James Stewart. (B/W) ★★★

CH5



Ashley Maddocks, Eddie Stobart: **12 Days of Christmas**, 8.00pm

6.00 Milkshake! 10.00 Chinese Food in Minutes Oriental cooking. (R) 10.05 **The Dog Rescuers** A Grimsby inspector finds two puppies locked in a dirty bathroom. (R) 10.41 **World's Strongest Man 2013: Qualifiers** James Richardson presents action from the Giants Live Series event in Norway, which was the fourth qualifier for the World's Strongest Man heats. (R) 11.40 **Eddie Stobart's Christmas Cracker** The truckers deliver a consignment of reindeer for a Christmas parade. (R) 12.40 **FILM: Clash of the Titans** (1981) A hero of ancient Greece journeys into the underworld to save a princess from being sacrificed to a sea monster. Mythical adventure, starring Harry Hamlin and Laurence Olivier. ★★★

Early View



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Prime Time



3.40 **Toy Story 2** (1999) Animated sequel, with the voice of Tom Hanks. ★★★★ 5.10 **Shrek the Halls** Festive animated short, starring the lovable ogre. (R) 5.35 **BBC News** 5.50 **Midlands Today**; Weather. 5.55 **Finding Nemo** (2003) Animated adventure, with the voices of Albert Brooks and Ellen DeGeneres. ★★★★ 7.30 **EastEnders** A defiant David resists Janine's plea to drop his blackmail plan, and Joey is optimistic as Alice's hearing arrives. Alfie and Kat bid an emotional farewell to the Queen Vic. 8.00 **Holby City** Edward is forced to make a confession about Mary-Claire, Zosia is determined not to let her father back into her life, and Mo tries to pluck up the courage to ask Mr Thompson out. 9.00 **Last Tango in Halifax** Gillian worries about the fallout from her confession and Kate is rushed to hospital. Caroline's emotions are in turmoil as Celia and Alan's wedding day dawns. Last in the series. 10.00 **Not Going Out** Christmas Special Lee invites Lucy and her parents to join him and Daisy to spend Christmas in a cosy old country house that used to belong to his aunt – but they soon sense a spooky presence. 10.45 **Outnumbered** Christmas special from 2012. The Brockmans throw a party, but Karen is too busy chatting online, Jake has fallen in with a bad crowd and the less said about the guests the better; (R) National Lottery Update 11.30 **BBC News**; Weather. 11.45 **Westminster Abbey: The First Eucharist of Christmas** Live service from Westminster Abbey in London, led by the Very Rev John Hall. Carols include: O Come, All Ye Faithful, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing and O Little Town of Bethlehem. 1.05 FILM: **Protocol** (1984) Comedy, with Goldie Hawn and Chris Sarandon. ★★★ 2.35 **Weatherview** 2.40 BBC News

Late View



4.15 **Fantasia** (1940) Premiere. Animated anthology, set to famous pieces of classical music. ★★★★ 6.15 **Carols from King's** Music and readings from the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge, including the carols once in Royal David's City, O Little Town of Bethlehem and God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen. 7.30 **The Perfect Morecambe & Wise Christmas Special** A selection of classic clips from the duo's festive BBC specials, including Angela Rippon coming out from behind the news desk and Andre Previn being shown how to play Grieg. 8.00 **Victoria Wood's Midlife Christmas** A festive special from 2009 that attempts to cram a night's Christmas viewing into an hour. Highlights include the Midlife Olympics 2009, popular costume drama Lark Pies to Cranchesterford and the adventures of soap star Bo Beaumont. (R) 9.00 **QI XL** Stephen Fry hosts a festive edition of the comedy quiz, with Jo Brand, Phill Jupitus, Brendan O'Carroll and Alan Davies answering questions on the theme of Kris Kringle. 9.45 **Mel Smith: I've Sort of Done Things** A celebration of the life and career of the actor, writer and director, who died in July at the age of 80. With contributions by Griff Rhys Jones, John Lloyd and Richard Curtis. 10.45 **Comedy Connections** The story of how Mel Smith and Griff Rhys Jones collaborated to create one of the most successful and influential partnerships in comedy history. (R) 11.25 **The Awakening** (2011) An investigator of supernatural hoaxes has her sceptical beliefs challenged when she is summoned to a haunting at a boarding school. Horror, starring Rebecca Hall and Dominic West. ★★★ 1.05 FILM: **The Spiral Staircase** (1945) Period thriller, starring Dorothy McGuire. (B/W) ★★★ 2.30 **This Is BBC 2**

3.45 **Fast Freddie, the Widow and Me** Drama, starring Laurence Fox and Sarah Smart. (R) 5.15 **The Nation's Favourite Christmas Song** A countdown of the top 20 festive tunes. (R) 6.45 **ITV News and Weather** 7.00 **Emmerdale** An emotional Priya tells David she wants him to call off the wedding and be a proper family with her and the baby. Megan packs her bags to leave after Declan lashes out again. 7.30 **You've Been Framed!** At Christmas Harry Hill narrates a festive and comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, featuring a kid wrestling a Christmas tree and the world's most terrifying present. 8.00 **Midsomer Murders** New series. Return of the long-running detective drama, starring Neil Dudgeon. It's a time of joy and happiness in Midsomer for once – Christmas is coming, and DCI Barnaby and his wife Sarah (Fiona Dolman) are soon to become parents. But the festive mood changes when a man is stabbed to death with an antique sword during a ghost-hunting party at a spooky manor house in Morton Shallows. Is blacksmith's daughter Rose Wilton seeking revenge from beyond the grave, or will Barnaby and new sidekick DS Charlie Nelson (Gwilym Lee) find a more earthly motive behind the murder? 10.00 **ITV News at Ten and Weather** 10.15 **Christmas Carols on ITV** Aled Jones presents an evening of festive performances from St Michael the Archangel Church in the village of Kirby Malham, North Yorkshire. 11.15 **Couples Retreat** (2009) Four couples sign up for relationship therapy on a tropical island, but the treatment only serves to drive them apart. Comedy, starring Vince Vaughn, Malin Akerman and Jon Favreau. ★★ 1.05 **The Jeremy Kyle Show** USA 2.00 **ITV Nightscreen** 5.05 **The Jeremy Kyle Show** (R)

3.50 **The Grinch** (2000) Fantasy comedy, starring Jim Carrey. ★★★ 6.00 **The Simpsons** Featuring a parody of Michael Bay's Transformers. (R) 6.25 **Hollyoaks** Grace urges Trevor to push ahead with his malicious plans for Mercedes. 6.55 **Channel 4 News** 7.00 **4thought.tv** How Christmas is perceived by those who do not celebrate it. 7.05 **Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas** A spin-off of the animated films. Sid the sloth tries to redeem himself after accidentally ruining one of Manny the mammoth's Christmas traditions. (R) 7.30 **The Snowman and the Snowdog** Animated sequel to classic festive tale The Snowman, in which a boy's snowman and snowdog magically come to life and take him on an adventure to the North Pole. (R) 8.05 **Big Fat Gypsy Weddings: Cards and Caravans** Following the Christmas celebrations of the travelling community, including an escape to the sun in Tenerife, a festive 18th birthday party and a spectacular winter wedding. (R) 9.00 **The IT Crowd Special: The Internet Is Coming** Roy and Jen's reputations are put at risk in the final episode when an incident involving split coffee and a homeless person ends up on the internet. Comedy, starring Chris O'Dowd. Part of The IT Crowd Night. (R) 10.00 **The IT Crowd Manual** Behind the scenes of the comedy. 11.05 **The IT Crowd: The Fans' Favourite Episode** A people's choice episode. (R) 11.35 **The IT Crowd: The Writer's Favourite Episode** Graham Linehan's favourite chapter for the gang. (R) 12.10 **The Inbetweeners** (R) 1.10 **The Inbetweeners** (R) 1.35 **The Inbetweeners** (R) 2.05 **Film: Idiocracy** (2006) ★★★ 3.25 **90210** 4.05 **Suburgatory** 4.30 **Suburgatory** 4.50 **Suburgatory** 5.15 **A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun** (R)

3.00 **Dirty Rotten Scoundrels** (1988) Comedy, starring Michael Caine and Steve Martin. ★★★ 5.10 **Scrooge – A Christmas Carol** (1951) A hard-hearted skulkin is taught the error of his ways by a succession of spectral visitors. Adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, with Alastair Sim and Mervyn Johns. ★★★ 7.00 **Eddie Stobart: 12 Days of Christmas** A compilation of the most memorable festive moments from the series following the haulage company, featuring workers battling the elements, the traffic and the Christmas rush; 5 News Update 8.00 **The Muppets and Lady Gaga at Christmas** The pop superstar joins forces with the furry gang of puppets for an entertainment extravaganza, performing seasonal favourites and her own hits. She sings duets with Kermit the Frog, musician Elton John, actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt and drag artist RuPaul, while Forgetting Sarah Marshall star Kristen Bell appears in a sketch alongside the Muppets and Lady Gaga; (R) 5 News at 9 9.10 **Greatest Ever Christmas Movies** Countdown of the best festive films, from White Christmas and It's a Wonderful Life to Bad Santa and Elf. Gremlins star Zach Galligan and Miracle on 34th Street's Mara Wilson talk about their experiences making their movies, while Aled Jones reveals that he hadn't even seen classic animation The Snowman until 10 years ago – despite having a hit in 1985 with a version of its famous song Walking in the Air. Featuring contributions by Ollie Locke, Stacey Solomon, Joe Swash and Eamonn Holmes. 12.05 **Britain's Craziest Christmas Lights** (R) 1.05 **SuperCasino 3.05 Blackpool Lights** 3.55 **House Doctor** (R) 4.20 **House Doctor** (R) 4.45 **Great Artists** (R) 5.10 **Nick's Quest** (R) 5.35 **Wildlife SOS** (R)

Christmas Day

BBC 1

Michael McIntyre's Showtime, from the O2 in London, 10.05pm

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. 9.00 **The Gruffalo's Child** Animated sequel, with the voice of Robbie Coltrane. (R) 9.25 **The Madagascar Penguins in a Christmas Caper** (R) 9.40 **Old Jack's Boat: The Christmas Quest** Jack's search for three Christmas gifts. 10.00 **Christmas Day: Live from Westminster Abbey** Traditional morning service. 11.00 **FILM: Chicken Run** (2000) Animated comedy, with the voices of Mel Gibson and Julia Sawalha. ★★★ 12.20 **BBC News: Weather**. 12.30 **FILM: The Princess and the Frog** (2009) Disney animated musical fantasy, with the voice of Anika Noni Rose. ★★★ 2.00 **Top of the Pops: Christmas** The year's most successful chart acts.

BBC 2

Actor Mark Gatiss presents MR James: Ghost Writer, 10.05pm

6.00 This is BBC 2 6.20 **Natural World: The Real Jungle Book** Bear India's sloth bear, the inspiration for The Jungle Book's Baloo. (R) 7.20 **FILM: Herbie Goes Bananas** (1980) Disney adventure, starring Cloris Leachman. ★★ 8.50 **FILM: The Red Shoes** (1948) Oscar-winning drama, with Moira Shearer. ★★★ 11.00 **Carols from King's Music** and readings from the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge. (R) 12.15 **Music of the Monarchy with David Starkey** A selection of full-length royal classics. 1.20 **Swingin' Christmas** Festive music by the John Wilson Orchestra. (R) 2.45 **The Perfect Morecambe & Wise Christmas Special** A selection of classic clips from the duo's festive BBC specials. (R)

ITV

Nick flies into a rage and slaps Leanne in Coronation Street, 7.30pm

6.00 **CITY: Babar and the Adventures of Badou** (R) 6.10 **Dino Dan** (R) 6.40 **Sooty** (R) 6.50 **Bookaboo** (R) 7.05 **Horrid Henry** (R) 7.20 **Almost Naked Animals** (R) 7.40 **Almost Naked Animals** (R) 7.55 **Bottom Knocker Street** 8.10 **Bottom Knocker Street** 8.25 **Bottom Date** (R) 9.25 **FILM: Santa Claus: The Movie** (1985) Family fantasy adventure, starring Dudley Moore. ★★ 11.25 **The Chase: Celebrity Special** (R) 12.30 **The Big Christmas Reunion** (R) 1.30 **You've Been Framed! At Christmas** (R) 2.00 **River Deep Mountain High: James Nesbitt** In New Zealand James Nesbitt travels from the tip of the North Island down to the South.

CH4

David Dickinson, Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special, 9.30pm

6.10 **Ivor the Invisible** (R) 6.35 **Prep & Landing** (R) 7.00 **Famous Fred** (R) 7.25 **Little Wolf's Book of Badness** (R) 7.55 **Olive, the Other Reindeer** (R) 8.50 **FILM: James and the Giant Peach** (1996) ★★★ 10.25 **FILM: Horton Hears a Who!** (2008) ★★★ 11.05 **The Big Bang Theory** Bernadette receives her PhD. (R) 12.35 **The Big Bang Theory** Sheldon re-evaluates the time he spends with Amy. 1.05 **The Simpsons** Homer plays Santa. (R) 1.40 **The Snowman** Animated adventure, based on Raymond Briggs' festive tale. (R) 2.10 **The Snowman and the Snowdog** Animated sequel to classic festive tale The Snowman. (R) 2.45 **The Simpsons** Bart destroys the family's Christmas presents. (R)

CH5

Noddy Holder narrates Britain's Craziest Christmas Lights, 7.30pm

6.00 **Milkshake!** 8.05 **FILM: Scrooge** (1970) A miserly man is taught the error of his ways by a host of spectral visitors. Musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, starring Albert Finney and Alec Guinness. ★★★ 10.15 **FILM: Gone with the Wind** (1939) A plantation heiress has a tumultuous relationship with a roguish Southern gentleman during the American Civil War. Epic romantic drama, starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable. ★★★★ 2.35 **FILM: Casablanca** (1942) The owner of a Moroccan nightclub is reunited with an old flame who needs his help to escape the country. Romantic drama, starring Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and Claude Rains. (b/w) ★★★

Early View**Prime Time****Late View**

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11.05 **BBC News: Weather**.
11.20 **On Christmas Night** Actor Patrice Naiambana reads from the Gospel of St Matthew, followed by the Sussex Carol performed by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge.

11.25 **The Vicar of Dibley** The villagers celebrate Christmas, and vicar Geraldine learns there is a heavy price to be paid for festive kindness when she agrees to attend three slap-up lunches. (R) National Lottery Update
12.10 **Would I Lie to You?** At Christmas (R) 12.40 **FILM: Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy** (2004) ★★★ 2.15 **Weatherview** 2.20 **BBC News**

11.05 **MR James: Ghost Writer** Actor and writer Mark Gatiss examines the life and career of author MR James, attempting to uncover the inspirations behind his stories of the supernatural.

11.05 **QI XL** Stephen Fry presents a festive special from 2010, as Daniel Radcliffe, Graham Norton, Lee Mack and regular Alan Davies answer questions on the theme of hocus pocus. (R)
11.50 **Hebburn** Sarah flies in to Hebburn for Christmas from Switzerland with Jack, and her parents and miserable grandmother head up north too. Last in the series. (R)
12.20 **FILM: Dead Poets Society** (1989) ★★★ 2.25 **This Is BBC 2 Nightscreen**

11.05 **ITV News and Weather**
10.45 **Love Actually** (2003) Interlinked tales of several people in search of love. Richard Curtis's romantic comedy, with Hugh Grant, Martine McCutcheon, Emma Thompson, Colin Firth, Bill Nighy and Liam Neeson. ★★★

1.10 **Christmas Carols on ITV** (R) 2.10 **FILM: Closing the Ring** (2007) Drama, starring Shirley MacLaine. ★★★ 4.05 **ITV Nightscreen**

11.05 **Father Ted Christmas Special** Fathers Ted and Dougal endure their worst Christmas ever when they get lost in a lingerie department, leaving them in a highly embarrassing predicament. Festive edition from 1996. (R)

12.15 **Father Ted** (R) 12.50 **Father Ted** (R) 1.20 **Father Ted** (R) 1.45 **Father Ted** (R) 2.15 **Father Ted** (R) 2.40 **Father Ted** (R) 3.05 **FILM: A Matter of Life and Death** (1946) ★★★ 4.50 90210 5.30 **Suburgatory** 5.55 **Prep & Landing: Naughty v Nice** (R)

11.40 **Greatest Christmas TV Moments** Countdown of 50 festive TV highlights, featuring Gavin & Stacey, Morecambe and Wise, Only Fools and Horses, Wallace and Gromit, Doctor Who, Top of the Pops and The Royle Family. (R)

2.35 **SuperCasino** 3.55 **House Doctor** (R) 4.20 **House Doctor** (R) 4.45 **Great Artists** (R) 5.10 **Nick's Quest** (R) 5.35 **Wildlife SOS** (R)

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FESTIVE OPENING TIMES

Monday 23rd December - 9 am-6 pm
 Christmas eve - 9 am-4 pm
 Christmas Day - CLOSED
 Boxing Day - CLOSED
 Friday 27th December - 9 am-6 pm
 Saturday 28th December - 9 am-6 pm
 Sunday 29th December 10.30 am-4.30 pm
 Monday 30th December 9 am-6 pm
 Tuesday 31st December 9 am-4 pm
 New year's day - 10.30 am-4.30 pm
 (NO DELIVERY SERVICE)

Thursday 2nd January 2014

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Boxing Day

BBC 1

Landlord Mick makes his presence felt in EastEnders, 7.15pm

BBC 2

Ben Fogle, Ben & James Versus the Arabian Desert on 9.15pm

ITV

Keith Lemon hosts Through the Christmas Keyhole, 11.20pm

CH4

Come Dine with Me: Comedians Christmas Special, 4.35pm

CH5

Laurence Shahlaei, World's Strongest Man 2013 on at 8.15pm

Early View**Prime Time****Late View**

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. 9.00 Room on the Broom (R) 9.25 Mouse and Mole at Christmas Time Snowmole takes Mole to a land where all of his wishes come true. 9.55 FILM: 101 Dalmatians (1996) Disney comedy adventure remake, starring Glenn Close. ★★★ 11.30 FILM: Flushed Away (2006) Animated adventure, featuring the voice of Hugh Jackman. ★★★ 12.50 BBC News 1.00 Regional News: Weather. 1.05 FILM: Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (2005) Oscar-winning animated adventure, with the voice of Peter Sallis. ★★★ 2.25 FILM: Alice in Wonderland (2010) Fantasy adventure, starring Mia Wasikowska. ★★★



6.00 This Is BBC 2 Preview of upcoming programmes. 6.05 Natural World The devastating power of the African driver ant. (R) 6.50 FILM: Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo (1977) Disney comedy adventure sequel, starring Dean Jones. ★★★ 8.35 Westminster Abbey The new intake of pupils talk about their lives at the choir school. Last in the series. (R) 9.35 Earthflight Bird's-eye view of the natural world. (R) 10.35 Pride & Prejudice: Having a Ball A team of experts recreates a Regency ball. (R) 12.05 FILM: Emma (1996) Jane Austen drama, starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Ewan McGregor. ★★★ 2.00 Operation Snow Tiger Part one of two. Scientists studying endangered Siberian tigers. (R)



6.00 CITV: Babar and the Adventures of Badou. (R) 6.10 Dino Dan (R) 6.25 Dino Dan (R) 6.40 Sooty (R) 6.50 Bookaboo 7.05 Horrid Henry (R) 7.20 Almost Naked Animals (R) 7.40 Almost Naked Animals (R) 7.55 Bottom Knocker Street 8.10 Bottom Knocker Street 8.25 Dinner Date David from Essex chooses three blind dates from five potential partners. Narrated by Charlotte Hudson. 9.25 FILM: Problem Child (1990) Comedy, starring John Ritter. ★ 11.00 FILM: The Flintstones (1994) Live-action version of the cartoon comedy, with John Goodman. ★★ 12.45 ITV News and Weather 1.05 FILM: Casper (1995) Family comedy starring Christina Ricci. ★★★



6.15 FILM: Mysterious Island (1961) Sci-fi adventure, starring Michael Craig. ★★★ 8.00 Morning Line A look ahead to today's meeting at Kempton Park. 9.00 Frasier Part two of two. Niles is suspected of being an accomplice to murder. (R) 9.30 Frasier Lillith and Frasier are set up on a blind date. (R) 10.00 The Big Bang Theory Howard gets caught in a strange argument. (R) 10.30 FILM: The King and I (1956) Oscar-winning musical, starring Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr. ★★★ 1.05 Channel 4 Racing Clare Balding and Nick Luck present live coverage of five races from Kempton Park and Wetherby, including the 3.10 King George VI Chase.



6.00 Milkshake! 9.45 World's Strongest Man 2013: Qualifiers (R) 10.45 Eddie Stobart: 12 Days of Christmas The haulage company's most memorable festive moments. (R) 11.45 World's Most Pampered Pets Documentary about people who spoil their pets. 12.45 FILM: High Society (1956) Complications arise when a playboy composer tries to stop his ex-wife from marrying another man. Romantic musical comedy, starring Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. ★★★ 2.55 FILM: Meet Me in St Louis (1944) A close-knit family is worried that a prospective move to New York will mean missing out on the 1904 World's Fair. Musical, starring Judy Garland, Tom Ewell and Margaret O'Brien. ★★★

3.00 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 - Behind the Magic

Part two of two. Lili Bonnin searches for a tiger that has gone missing. (R)

4.00 Final Score

A round-up of this afternoon's football results.

5.15 You Have Been Watching - David Croft

A tribute to the TV comedy writer. (R)

6.15 Dad's Army (1971)

The Home Guard soldiers are put on their mettle as they get ready to capture three German aviators. British comedy based on the TV series, starring Arthur Lowe and John Le Mesurier.

7.45 Christmas University Challenge

Alumni from the colleges of Gonville & Caius, Cambridge, and Christ Church, Oxford, compete, with Andrew Graham-Dixon and Michael Dobbs among the contestants.

8.15 Idris Elba - King of Speed

Part one of two. Documentary in which the Luther star embarks on an international journey to explore the history of car racing while sampling the thrill of competition vehicles.

9.20 Ben & James Versus the Arabian Desert

Part one of two. Four years after On Thin Ice - their Antarctic expedition for BBC Two - James Cracknell and Ben Fogle reunite to attempt an unguided crossing of a portion of the Rub' al Khali desert - also known as the Empty Quarter. The duo are following in the footsteps of British explorer Wilfred Thesiger, who travelled extensively in the region between 1945 and 1949 and earned the nickname of Mubarak bin London from the Bedouin tribes.

3.00 Operation Snow Tiger

Part two of two. Lili Bonnin searches for a tiger that has gone missing. (R)

4.00 Off Their Rockers

A pensioner's wheelchair is stolen. Last in the series. (R)

5.15 The Nation's Favourite Elvis Song

A countdown of the King's 20 greatest hits, as voted for by the public, featuring contributions by stars he influenced and an interview with his ex-wife Priscilla Presley. (R)

6.00 ITV News and Weather

6.15 Emmerdale

Hour-long episode. At Home Farm, the fire is raging and Charity tries to get Declan to leave. Eventually, they flee the grounds, but Megan rushes inside - and becomes trapped.

7.15 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 (2010)

Premiere. The dark lord Voldemort rises to ultimate power over the magical world, so the teenage wizard and his friends set out on a mission to find the magical horcruxes - artefacts containing parts of the evil wizard's soul that hold the key to destroying him. The first half of the two-part conclusion to the fantasy saga, starring Daniel Radcliffe, Ralph Fiennes, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint. ★★★

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10.05 I Am Britney Jean: Britney Spears in Las Vegas

Documentary following the pop star as she prepares for her performance residency in Las Vegas, revealing how she handles the pressures that come with the next chapter of her career.

11.05 ITV News and Weather

11.20 Through the Christmas Keyhole

Keith Lemon returns with a festive rummage through the homes of three mystery celebrities, challenging regular panellist Dave Berry and guests to guess their identities. (R)

12.20 FILM: The Affair of the Necklace (2001)

Period drama, starring Hilary Swank. ★★★ 2.20 FILM: Inland Empire (2006) Mystery drama, starring Laura Elena. ★★★ 5.20 ITV Nightscreen

3.35 Deal or No Deal: Ideal Christmas

Noel Edmonds hosts a festive-themed edition.

4.00 Come Dine with Me: Comedians Christmas Special

Sean Hughes, Gina Yashere, Paul Tonkinson and Duncan Norvelle compete. (R)

5.35 Hollyoaks

The Roscoes have more than one reason to celebrate as Christmas Day arrives. Fraser worries when Grace goes missing, and plans are put into action to steal Mercedes' new fortune.

6.05 Channel 4 News

6.15 4thoght.tv

How Christmas is perceived by those who do not celebrate it.

6.20 Independence Day (1996)

A fleet of huge flying saucers launches a devastating and unprovoked attack on Earth. As survivors try to flee the seemingly unstoppable alien invaders, the courageous US president, an ace pilot and a computer genius come up with a plan to take the fight to the enemy and save the human race. Roland Emmerich's sci-fi adventure, starring Will Smith, Bill Pullman, Jeff Goldblum, Mary McDonnell, Randy Quaid and Harry Connick Jr. ★★★

9.00 Big Fat Quiz of the Year 2013

Jimmy Carr poses questions about the major events of the year to Jack Whitehall, Jonathan Ross, Dara O Briain, Kristen Schaal, Noel Fielding and Richard Ayoade.

11.05 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special

The comedian hosts a show filled with festive fun and frolics, joined by actor and comedian Russell Brand, presenters Davina McCall and David Dickinson, and girl group Little Mix, who perform their new single Little Me. Last in the series. (R)

12.10 FILM: Machete (2010)

Action thriller, starring Danny Trejo. ★★★ 2.00 FILM: Legend (1985) Fantasy adventure with Tom Cruise. ★★ 3.35 A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun (R) 4.35 Secret Removers 5.30 Suburgatory 5.55 Suburgatory

12.10 Michael Buble's Christmas Special 2013

1.00 SuperCasino 3.05 Blackpool Lights 3.55 House Doctor (R) 4.20 House Doctor (R) 4.45 Great Artists (R) 5.10 Nick's Quest (R) 5.35 Wildlife SOS (R)

Friday 27 December



Prime Time

Late View

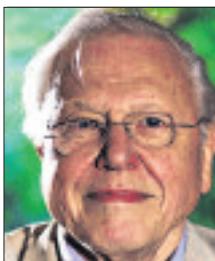
BBC 1



Mick lets Shirley and Tina move into the Vic in EastEnders, 8.00pm

6.00 Breakfast 8.20 Match of the Day (R) 9.50 FILM: 102 Dalmatians (2000) Disney family adventure sequel, starring Glenn Close. ★★★ 11.25 FILM: Bedtime Stories (2008) Fantasy comedy, starring Adam Sandler. ★★ 1.00 BBC News; Weather. 1.15 Regional News; Weather. 1.25 Open All Hours: A Celebration The enduring appeal of the classic comedy. 1.55 Len Goodman's Perfect Christmas Festive TV clips chosen by the Strictly judge. (R) 2.35 FILM: Enchanted (2007) A fairy-tale princess is magically transported from her cartoon world to modern-day New York. Part-animated fantasy comedy, starring Amy Adams, James Marsden and Susan Sarandon. ★★★

BBC 2



David Attenborough explores the continent's wildlife in Africa, 9.30am

6.00 This Is BBC 2 6.30 Natural World: Tiger Dynasty. (R) 7.30 Sign Zone: Great Continental Railway Journeys (R) 8.30 Sign Zone: Africa 2013: Countdown to the Rains The rains finally arrive and the grazing animals spread out across the valley. Last in the series. (R) 9.30 Africa David Attenborough explores the continent's wildlife and landscape. (R) 10.30 Earthflight (R) 11.30 FILM: War and Peace (1956) Historical drama, starring Audrey Hepburn. ★★★ 2.50 FILM: How the West Was Won (1962) Three generations of a pioneer family experience many ordeals as they try to build a life for themselves on the American frontier. Epic Western, starring James Stewart and John Wayne. ★★★

ITV



Harry Hill narrates You've Been Framed! shown at 8.00pm

6.00 CITV: Babar and the Adventures of Babou. (R) 6.10 Dino Dan (R) 6.25 Dino Dan (R) 6.40 Sooty (R) 6.50 Bookaboo. 7.05 Horrid Henry. (R) 7.20 Almost Naked Animals (R) 7.40 Almost Naked Animals (R) 7.55 Bottom Knockers Street. 8.10 Bottom Knockers Street 8.25 Dinner Date Russell from Essex takes part in the dating show. (R) 9.25 Murder, She Wrote A ventriloquist is accused of murder. (R) 10.25 Dickinson's Real Deal (R) 11.25 FILM: Batteries Not Included (1987) Sci-fi fantasy, starring Jessica Tandy. ★★★ 1.25 ITV News and Weather 1.35 ITV News Central; Weather. 1.40 FILM: Step Up (2006) Musical romance, with Channing Tatum and Jenna Dewan. ★★★

CH4



Noel Edmonds hosts Deal or No Deal: Ideal Christmas, 3.15pm

6.15 Suburgatory 6.40 According to Jim (R) 7.05 According to Jim (R) 7.30 Will & Grace (R) 7.55 Will & Grace (R) 8.20 FILM: A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventures (2010) Premiere. Animated adventure, with the voice of Dominic Cooper. ★★★ 10.00 The Big Bang Theory Penny considers breaking up with Leonard. (R) 10.30 The Big Bang Theory Sheldon hires an attractive female assistant. (R) 10.55 The Simpsons Homer wakes up to find his family missing. (R) 11.25 The Simpsons Mayor Quimby brings election day forward. (R) 11.55 FILM: Aliens in the Attic (2009) Children's sci-fi comedy, starring Carter Jenkins. ★★★ 1.35 FILM: Dr Dolittle (1998) Comedy, starring Eddie Murphy. ★★★

CH5



The hapless hero bags a bargain in Do It Yourself Mr Bean, 9.30pm

6.00 Milkshake! 10.00 World's Strongest Man 2013 The opening heat from Haikang Bay in Sanya, China. (R) 11.00 Eddie Stobart's Christmas Cracker The truckers deliver a consignment of reindeer for a Christmas parade. (R) 12.00 FILM: 633 Squadron (1964) RAF pilots are sent to bomb a German rocket-fuel plant, but the capture of a resistance fighter threatens the plan. Second World War drama, with Cliff Robertson and George Chakiris. ★★★ 1.50 FILM: Zulu Dawn (1979) Fact-based historical drama, charting events leading to the massacre of more than 1,500 British soldiers at Isandlwana. Prequel to Zulu, starring Burt Lancaster and Peter O'Toole. Edited for violence and language. ★★★

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Early View

4.10 Megamind (2010) Premiere. Animated superhero comedy, with the voice of Will Ferrell. ★★★
5.40 BBC News; Weather. 5.55 BBC Midlands Today; Weather.
6.05 Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull (2008) The globe-trotting archaeologist races against Soviet agents to find a mysterious artefact of untold power. Action-adventure sequel, starring Harrison Ford and Cate Blanchett. ★★★
8.00 EastEnders Linda is livid with Mick for letting his sisters move into the Vic, and bonds with Sharon over their mutual dislike of Shirley. Peter finds the money Cindy stole from Phil.
8.30 Miranda The shop owner's friends accuse her of being immature so she sets out to prove them wrong – first by looking after a toddler, then by hosting a grown-up dinner party. (R)
9.00 Death Comes to Pemberley Darcy retreats into a version of his younger self as the fallout from Wickham's arrest threatens his marriage, and Louisa Bidwell's unforeseen revelation adds to his wife's anxiety. Concludes tomorrow.
10.00 BBC News
10.15 Regional News; Weather; National Lottery Update
10.20 Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special The first of two festive editions. Mrs Brown tries to find out what her grandson wants for Christmas and loses her temper at the family games night when no one plays by her rules. (R)
11.00 Not Going Out Christmas Special Lee and the gang spend Christmas in a spooky country house. (R)
11.45 John Bishop's Christmas Show Festive giggles, featuring Jason Manford, Nina Conti, David O'Doherty and Tim Vine. (R)
12.45 FILM: The Lonely Guy (1984) Comedy, with Steve Martin and Charles Grodin. ★★ 2.10 Weatherview 2.15 BBC News

Prime Time

5.15 Flog It! From National Museum Cardiff. (R)
6.00 Celebrity Eggheads Derek Jacobi, Frances Barber, Neil Dudgeon, Fiona Laird and Emma Fielding take on the general knowledge champions. Hosted by Dermot Murnaghan. (R)
6.30 The Choir: Sing While You Work The three remaining choirs face their biggest challenge as they perform a song composed by Paul Mealor at Ely Cathedral, before one is picked as the winner. Last in the series. (R)
7.30 Christmas University Challenge Distinguished graduates of St Hugh's College, Oxford, compete with those of the University of Stirling, with Suzy Klein and Paul Lewis among the contestants.
8.00 Idris Elba – King of Speed Part two of two. The Luther star examines the importance of precision driving skills in motorsports, learning the art of rallying from former world champion Ari Vatanen.
9.00 Ben & James Versus the Arabian Desert Part two of two. James Cracknell and Ben Fogle continue their expedition across the Arabian Desert. As they try to pick up the pace, disaster strikes when one of them suffers a serious injury, leading to further delays – although it does allow them to reflect on their friendship.
10.00 Cast Away (2000) A manager for a courier service has to fend for himself when a plane crash leaves him stranded alone on a desert island. Initially panic-stricken, he overcomes his terror to survive for four years on his own before building a raft and setting off on an epic journey back home. Adventure drama, starring Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt, Nick Searcy, Lari White and Chris Noth. ★★★
12.15 Ambassadors (R) 1.15 FILM: The Mummy (1959) Hammer horror, starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. ★★ 2.40 Sign Zone: Imagine: Who's Afraid of Machiavelli? (R) 3.40 Sign Zone: Waiting for Gaga: A Culture Show Special (R) 4.40 This Is BBC 2

Late View

3.45 The Chase With Lorraine Kelly, Craig Charles, Jamie and Dom Joly.
4.45 Downton Abbey The Crawleys are implicated in a scandal that threatens to engulf the royal family. Last in the series. (R)
6.35 ITV News Central; Weather.
6.45 ITV News and Weather
7.00 Emmerdale Robbie becomes suspicious of Charity and Declan at the hospital, so she returns to Home Farm planning to delete the CCTV footage, but what she views gives her food for thought.
7.30 Coronation Street Hayley waits nervously for the results of her scan. Nick admits to causing Leanne's black eye, and Maddy owns up to the theft of Sally's handbag.
8.00 You've Been Framed! Harry Hill narrates a comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, featuring everything from cute kids and crazy animals to pranks and painful-looking accidents. (R)
8.30 Coronation Street Hayley breaks down and lashes out at Roy. David is concerned when a despondent Kylie returns to No 8, and Nick makes a decision that has repercussions for Leanne.
9.00 The Inbetweeners Movie (2011) A festive edition of the comedy starring Ian McEwan and Derek Jacobi. Freddie and Stuart invite friends round for a Christmas Day celebration at their flat.
9.35 Bridget Jones's Diary (2001) A woman begins a new year by resolving to find love and give up her bad habits. Romantic comedy based on Helen Fielding's novel, with Renee Zellweger, Hugh Grant and Colin Firth. ★★★
11.20 ITV News at Ten and Weather; Weather.
11.35 The Cube A childminder and a Londoner take up the challenge, aiming to complete tasks within the confines of the cube to win a jackpot of £250,000. Hosted by Phillip Schofield. (R)
12.25 Jackpot247 Interactive gaming. 3.00 FILM: The Majestic (2001) Drama, starring Jim Carrey. ★★★ 5.30 ITV Nightscreen

9.00 The Inbetweeners Movie (2011) Awkward teenagers Simon, Will, Jay and Nei head to Greece for a wild holiday – but things do not go to plan. Comedy, with Joe Thomas, Simon Bird, James Buckley and Blake Harrison. ★★★
10.55 Queer as Pop: From the Gay Scene to the Mainstream Documentary revealing how the social and political liberation of gay men has inspired and influenced the music mainstream over the past 40 years.
11.55 Chic: iTunes Festival Special Lauren Laverne introduces footage from the group's performance at the music event at London's Roundhouse.
12.55 Kylie Minogue: Showgirl – Live At Earl's Court 1.55 FILM: The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975) ★★ 3.35 9.0210 4.15 A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun (R) 5.10 SuperScrappers 5.20 Deal or No Deal (R)

12.15 SuperCasino 3.05 Blackpool Lights 3.50 Motorsport Mundial 4.20 House Doctor (R) 4.45 Great Artists (R) 5.10 Nick's Quest (R) 5.35 Wildlife SOS (R)

What's On!

Marking 75th year of Rep's festive fun

WITH 75 years of pantomimes and performances under their belt, Oldbury Rep's production of Jack and the Beanstalk promises to be a giant of a family panto.

This production of the well known fairytale has been written by Alan Wood, the group's longest serving member.

The group celebrated its 75th anniversary this year and has performed more than 400 shows over the years.

This is the fifth time the theatre has put on Jack and the Beanstalk since their first production in 1978.

It runs from Friday, January 10, to Saturday, January 18.

Tickets: Adults £10, concessions £9. Call 0121 552 2761 or visit the www.oldburyrep.org website.

It's Mother Goose for Stourbridge

STOURBRIDGE Pantomime Company are once again treading the boards in a seasonal favourite.

The group, which has been going since 1969, will present classic panto Mother Goose at Stourbridge Town Hall following a successful production of Cinderella last year.

In 2011 the group won the best pantomime in the Black Country award at the national Operatic and Dramatic Association West Midlands ceremony.

Mother Goose runs from January 18 to 25. Tickets are adults £13, concessions £9. Call 01384 836963 or see the www.stourbridgepanto.co.uk website.

How to look good in panto

HE'S used to telling us how to look good naked but Gok Wan will swap fashion for panto fun to star in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs at Birmingham Hippodrome.

Joanne is the wicked queen



Joanne Malin plays the villainous Queen Evilene

A TRADITIONAL panto with audience participation returns to The Garrick Theatre with TV newsreader Joanne Malin as Queen Evilene in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

The Lichfield theatre is celebrating 10 years of pantomime. It is produced completely in-house, with no touring company in sight, and features a professional cast. Children from local dance schools, including Bojangles in the city, and a live band will feature.

The show runs until Sunday, January 5. Tickets cost Adults £22.50 or £20, children £13.50 or £12.50. Contact 01543 412121 or see www.lichfieldgarrick.com

The TV fashion guru plays the Man in the Mirror, and stars alongside EastEnders actor John Partridge, who is best known for playing Christian in the BBC soap, as Prince Charming.

The star-studded cast also includes television and film legend Stephanie Beacham, who appeared in Dynasty, and who will take to the stage as The Wicked Queen.

Song and dance man Gary Wilmot will also star in the show in his first appearance as a panto dame.

Danielle Hope, aged 21, who won the BBC's talent show Over the Rainbow, to appear as Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz at the London Palladium will be taking the role of Snow White.

No actual dwarfs will be appearing in the show though, with the magnificent seven being played by physical theatre actors wearing special costumes to make them look small. The production runs from Thursday, December 19, to Sunday, February 2.

Ticket prices range from £12 to £39. For further details contact 0844 338 5000 or visit www.birminghamhippodrome.com



Are you sure about that collar girlfriend? Gok Wan with Stephanie Beacham and John Partridge in costume for Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs at Birmingham Hippodrome which opens tonight and continues until February 2

Muddles is to rescue a Princess

WOLVERHAMPTON'S Grand Theatre has launched Sleeping Beauty which continues until January 18 starring comedian and former King of the I'm a Celebrity jungle Joe Pasquale as Muddles.

His is joined by former Coronation Street star Lucy Evans as Princess Beauty and international cabaret artist Ceri Dupree as Queen Passionella.

A total of 59,000 people went to see last year's show, Jack and the Beanstalk, during its six week run. Bosses at the Lichfield Street theatre say Sleeping Beauty is set to be the theatre's most popular pantomime yet.

It runs until January 18 and tickets range from £16.50 to £26.50. Concessions available. Contact 01902 429212 or see www.grandtheatre.info for further details.

See review - page 22

Dick Whittington turning to Forest

NOW in its fifth year at the Leamore venue, the Forest Arts Centre's panto has become the biggest in Walsall.

The show features professional actors alongside members of Walsall Youth Theatre, which is also based at the Hawbush Road venue.

Dick Whittington runs until this Sunday. Tickets are £6. Call 0845 111 2898 or see www.forestartscentre.co.uk

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Motoring

Compiled by Motoring
Editor Sharon Walters

Mercedes is fastest growing premium brand

MERCEDES-BENZ UK's record registration year continues, with the company reporting its best-ever results, according to the latest figures released by SMMT.

The company is still the fastest-growing premium brand in the UK car market, with registrations growing 19 per cent over 2012's previous records.

Passenger car registrations – at 7,813 for the month – were the best November result ever-seen, and contributed to a monthly market share of 4.9 per cent.

For the first time in its UK history, the company has



Sprinter vans have seen an increase of 14.4% so far this year

achieved more than 100,000 new car registrations in a year. The 100,000th customer was Jamie Leigh Arndell, who collected her first Mercedes-Benz, a white A 180 CDI Sport. She joins the 16,397 drivers who have taken delivery of an A-Class so far this year.

Elsewhere, the new generation E-Class range is proving particularly popular, with all four body styles showing significant growth YTD.

E-Class Coupé is up nine per cent to 4,470 cars; E-Class Cabriolet up six per cent to 4,112; E-Class Estate shows an eight per cent rise to 4,001; whilst the E-Class Saloon is up to 14,505 new cars – an increase of 36 per cent YTD.

Deliveries of the new S-Class luxury saloon in November were almost double its nearest rival, and registrations of the new range and the run-out year of the old model are at 1,372 new cars, keeping S-Class as the most successful luxury saloon in the UK.

Performances

High performances were also reported across the company's AMG range, with 2,947 cars registered so far in 2013 – a growth of 47 per cent. The C 63 AMG remains the UK's most popular choice, with 1,522 registered this year, and more than 320 A 45 AMGs have taken to the UK's roads in 2013.

A strong month saw van registrations rise 18.5 per cent in November 2013, with Vito up 29.2 per cent to 513 units. Sprinter, with 18,488 registered YTD, reported an increase of 14.4 per cent so far this year.

Combined results mean that the vans division is looking set to have a record-breaking performance in 2013 once the year-end results are published in a month.

In trucks, deliveries of the new Antos and Arocs ranges began, but it was tractor units where the biggest success was shown.

Axor registrations were up 34.8 per cent in November, to 248 units, whilst Actros more than doubled the

same month last year, with 459 units registered. So far this year, 2,713 Actros have been registered – up 42 per cent on 2012. Marcus Breitschwerdt, president and CEO Mercedes-Benz UK, said: "November 2013 has entered Mercedes-Benz UK's history books as a real milestone."

Breaking through the 100,000 new car sales figure is a landmark achievement, helped by a strong model range – in fact we offer the widest choice of vehicles in the entire industry.

It's fantastic to see that British customers are voting with their purchase and lease choices in record numbers.

"Our success isn't confined to one part of our range though – as well as new compact cars like the A-Class and CLA, the extensive revisions we made to E-Class earlier this year have shown strong growth across all four body styles.

The car has been tailored to specifically meet UK demands and market conditions, and our engine and equipment packages are key in contributing to these numbers.

"We're also showing class-leading results in luxury and high-powered motoring, too.

"We've been in run-out of the previous S-Class for most of the year, but still lead the segment despite sales of the new model only beginning recently. And it's great to see AMG sales continuing to accelerate. Record after record is being broken."

"Our commercial vehicles division is recovering strongly too, with our vans on the verge of a significant best-ever record performance this year."

Market conditions have influenced the tractor segment, but as the first manufacturer to bring Euro 6 trucks to the UK, we're seeing great results in both Euro 5 and Euro 6 products."

Mr Breitschwerdt said he was confident that Mercedes-Benz UK will end the year in style. "Our significant, consistent record-breaking performance is due to a lot of factors – great products sold and serviced by a great team across our networks help of course."

"But we'd be nowhere without our customers, who have a greater choice of cars, vans and trucks than ever before."



Jamie Leigh Arndell, the 100,000th customer in 2013



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Victory for swimmers in the last of rounds

National League Round 3
SWIMMERS from Halesowen Swimming Club travelled to Worcester for the final round of the West Midlands National League Premier Division.

The swimmers were looking to return to winning ways and after the opening relay events had opened up a five point gap to the other teams.

The gala was never going to be easy and at the halfway point Halesowen were still in contention but five points behind first spot but, after a strong run of results, the team were back in the lead by 10 points with just the final relays to go.

The swimmers ran out winners overall by 11 points to finish 2013 in fine style.

Stars of the show were double event winners Kate Morrice in the butterfly and freestyle; James Cuthbert in the breaststroke and butterfly and Richard Spoor in the breaststroke and individual medley.

Other individual winners were Chloe Finch and Josh Bradley in the freestyle and Mark Laing in the breaststroke.

The age 13 and under boys team including Jakob Baker, Jamie Greenwood and Jack Simpson won the medley relay and the open mens team including Zach Collins, Jacob Darby, Michael Edmonds were unbeatable in both freestyle and medley relays.

Halesowen 210, Long Eaton A 199, Worcester 195, Bilston 186, City of Hereford 156, Calverton & Bingham 101.

Hicklin at the double

Halas Hawks Ladies 1
Stourbridge Ladies 3
STOURBRIDGE made the short trip to Premier League Halas Hawks in the second round of the League Cup.

Stourbridge pressure was rewarded when a Katie McBain effort was sliced into the goal by a Halas defender.

In the second half Charlie Hicklin doubled the lead with a low shot that beat the keeper at the near post and now Stourbridge were totally in control, reducing Halas to long range efforts.

Then Stourbridge failed to clear their lines and Halas halved the deficit.

The game was settled when Hicklin struck again for Stourbridge.



Sophie Richards

Halesowen Ladies 5 Wednesfield 0

The Yeltz Ladies squad faced Wednesfield in the county cup and the visitors are three leagues above them in the Regional Premier.

So Halesowen were expecting a tough game.

However, with stronger opposition, Halesowen always raise their game.

Playing with a strong wind across the pitch Halesowen took the game to the visitors.

With the strong powerful midfield pairing of Sarah Hamill and

Football

Tracey Haycock the home side were giving nothing away and there was some great work on the wing by Haycock who found Hayley Chatwin unmarked and with a controlled take down placed the ball past the stranded keeper.

Within five minutes the Yeltz were two up with Katie Moore driving the ball into the roof of the net.

Chloe Harris scored a deserved goal late in the half with Sophie Richards showing the visitors

how Halesowen wingers play. Half time came with Halesowen having most of the control of the game.

Second half and Wednesfield with nothing to lose came at the Yeltz side. The tackles were crunching and it was no place for the faint-hearted.

After a free kick placed in to the visitor's defence the ball was headed out and found Shel Thomas and from 30 yards out she smashed the ball back in to the open goal making it 4-0.

Wednesfield did huff and puff but the outstanding centre backs

of Gemma Moss and Charlotte Byatt of the Yeltz and one of the best in the league kept them at bay.

Goal of the game came late on through Haycock on the volley who scored a perfect goal of which any premiership striker would have been proud.

Manager Scott McKee said, on paper Wednesfield should have won the game, but the ladies were on point in commitment and passion, we were the better side from start to finish and deserved to be in the quarter finals.

Heathens plans for Kurtz are in tatters

CRADLEY Heathens' plans to sign double Australian under-16 champion Brady Kurtz have been blown out of the water.

The fallout means the all-conquering side have reluctantly jettisoned title-winner Dan Greenwood from their planned line-up.

Club chairman Nigel Pearson said: "Brady was agreed a fortnight ago, but we have received notification in writing that the British Speedway Promoters' Association have deemed him ineligible for the National League."

"We have spent all day number crunching and a very reluctant decision has been made to release Dan. It's a setback, but Dan has been very philosophical and we will do everything we can to fix him up elsewhere."

Greenwood insists there are no hard feelings.

"The change in circumstances with Brady Kurtz has also had a knock-on effect for myself, which I'm gutted about but totally understand," he said.

"I will keep in touch with all my friends and sponsors." Cradley have Steve Worrall and Max Clegg on board.

Old Hales take charge in friendly

Halesonians 2nds 17
Bournville 2nds 12

OLD Halesonians Seconds welcomed Bournville Seconds to Wassell Grove for a friendly game in extremely blustery conditions.

Towards the end of the first half, Bournville pressed the Old Hales line and finally broke through to score a converted try.

Old Hales came out for the second half with more purpose and wing Simon Sabel who ran 60 metres to score under the posts.

Tom Harris converting the score.

Harris then slotted away a penalty kick.

Alex Church then scored under the posts, again Harris converted.

Bournville's second row struck back and squeezed over for a try.

The conversion attempt was charged down by a determined Andy Holloway to secure a 17-12 win for Old Hales.

Saxons exorcise ghost of snow-bound defeat

Bromsgrove 7 Stourbridge Saxons 41

AN error-strewn affair at Finstall Park exorcised the ghost of Bromsgrove's snow-bound victory back in January.

The game produced a bonus point win that keeps the Saxons very much in the four-way race at the top of National 2 North. Wing Nathan Bressington's hat-trick further extended his record to 59 tries in club colours.

An early rash of Bromsgrove tackle and maul infringements were penalised and flanker Dave Hughes was handed a yellow card.

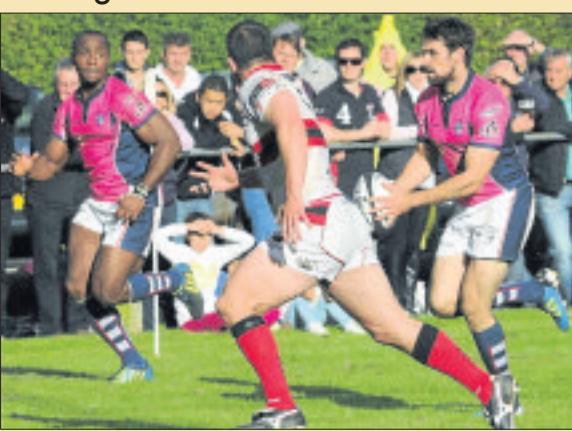
The Saxons pack worked a catch and drive, shunting the depleted defenders over the line for Nigel Mukarati to make the opening score.

Ben Hughes was next to drive over and score.

Mukarati broke right from the base of the scrum and passed to Sione Tuipolotu who cut through the defence to score.

Tom Jarvis then sold full-back Ollie Baché an outrageous dummy and waltzed over to score the bonus point try. Hughes returned from the sinbin to galvanise a Bromsgrove side staring at a heavy defeat.

At the same time the



Nathan Bressington with the ball with Nigel Mukarati in support for the Saxons

Saxons got on the wrong side of Mr Watters and conceded sequence of six penalties.

Ben Barkley secured the ball and drove through several defenders, it was worked quickly right to Dipple whose long cut-out pass found Dan Thompson.

He executed a simple draw and give to Jarvis, and with the cover struggling to get across Bromsgrove again outpaced the defence and scored from just inside his own half.

With Saxons a man down due to a yellow card the

hosts couldn't make the man advantage pay.

White's return heralded a high-tempo last 10 minutes that saw the penalty flow reversed as the hosts shipped five.

A quick tap deep in Bromsgrove's 22 set up Bressington's third try as White's long floated pass allowed him to canter in at the corner in the dying seconds.

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visitors

Coventry Sphinx 2
Tipton Town 0

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erly wind blew incessantly but Sphinx adapted to the
conditions the better of the
two sides and it was Tipton
who were made to feel the
chill.

The home side opened
their account with a stunning
strike by Ash Wilkes who, with the gale at his
back, launched a spectacular
volley from near the right
touchline to beat Pember-
ton.

Tipton resumed after the
break with the wind at their
backs, but their hopes nose-
dived when they fell 2-0
in the 50th minute.

Their defence got pulled
out of position and Liam
Gladins drove the ball home.

Thereafter, Connor Gator
responded for the visitors with a goal worthy effort turned aside with difficulty by Carl O'Neill.

Lee Wherton excelled in
the 71st minute, launching a
ball-winning tackle on
Wilkes as Sphinx pressed.

Sphinx went desperately
close to a third goal seven
minutes from time when
substitute Aden Moore cut
in from the left wing and
arrowed his drive only just
wide of the visitors' post.

In the final moments
Danny Ashton twice went
close for Tipton, lobbing just
over the top following a
corner kick and seconds
later firing inches wide.

**Glassboys in
loss at home**

Stourbridge 0
Arlesey Town 2

STOURBRIDGE fell to their
first home defeat for three
months against a strong,
athletic and hard-working
Arlesey side.

The Glassboys best
chance of the afternoon
came in the 14th minute
when a first-time flick by
Benbow from a Geddes pass
played in Rowe on the right-
hand side of the box,
however, he slipped his low
angled shot past the far post.

Instead it was the visitors
who made the breakthrough
on the half-hour with a well
worked goal.

The Glassboys were
finding it increasingly hard
to build up any real momentum.

Four minutes before time
Arlesey made sure of the
three points when Coleman
blocked a cross, but he could
do nothing to prevent Hatch
from burying the rebound in
the goal.

Loss of identity led to loss of Baggies boss



Steve Clarke – sacked

STEVE CLARKE can call on some high-powered testimonials as to the quality of his work.

Five-star managers, former and current internationals – all have been unanimous about Clarke's abilities, certainly as a coach.

But the axe has fallen in support of one of the game's oldest adages. All teams eventually assume the personality of the man at the helm and under their quiet and undemonstrative head coach, Albion had become anonymous.

Like the names Clarke can put on

Football

his CV, the Baggies have an impressive roster, by easy consent their most impressive of the Premier League era.

But they have become neither one thing nor the other in a year of deepening decline; all the glitter is on paper when it needs to be on the pitch.

After one-and-a-half seasons, it is difficult to know what Clarke's Albion stand for, what their identity is. He certainly never seemed to

settle on a best team. They have an array of attacking weaponry, but struggle to score goals. The stylish, possession-based passing football now comes only in fits and starts.

A defence that was the basis of his predecessor's success, has lost its certainty. Albion don't surrender meekly, but neither do they take games by the scruff of the neck.

In the eyes of supporters, Clarke was a reactive manager and not proactive, a man who seemed to approach games making sure he didn't lose it before he tried to win it.

There have been times in the club's Premier League story when that would have been acceptable – but not when he has such an impressive array of offensive talent at his disposal.

All of this has combined to cost him his place and when the brutality of the moment has passed the 50-year-old Scot with the blue chip contacts book may view his first spell in charge as a missed opportunity.

He wanted to preach caution still when The Hawthorns was primed for greater adventure.

Hales end
on top in
close call

Newport 23 Old Hales 29

OLD Halesians travelled to Shropshire for a close fought rugby game that seemed to favour the better prepared home side.

This was to be a hard fought battle with the lead changing several times during the game.

After nine minutes Hales fly half Steve Powell converted a penalty to lead 0-3.

Pressure by the home side was rewarded by Hales giving a penalty to Newport which resulted in a converted pushover try.

Shortly after Newport again forced another penalty. Joe Oxford who took on his opposite number in his usual railroad manner for a great try.

Five minutes later Newport were again looking stronger in maul and ruck which resulted in a converted pushover try.

A Newport handling error gave the ball to Hales and Luke Smith sprinted for a try. Newport again came back with a try, converted for a 20 to 17 lead.

Powell then scored for Hales. After 65 minutes Newport got their final points through a penalty.

A driving maul led by Tom Jordan saw him secure a well deserved try which Powell converted.

Festive rallying cry from Jackett

KENNY JACKETT is calling Wolves to rediscover their hunger by claiming a bumper 15-point festive haul.

The Molineux head coach sees Saturday's clash at inform Rotherham as the ideal challenge.

"There are 15 points to play for and everyone plays exactly the same programme. We have to get a good chunk of those 15 points."

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Ketley, Telford. Thursday, December 19, 2013.

FIRST WIN ELUDES THE DK BATTLES

Dudley Kingswinford 5 Chester 36

IF matches were decided on effort and commitment then DK surely were worthy of a major shock and recording their first win of the season.

For almost an hour they dominated possession and territory but could only muster one try for all their efforts against a physically strong and defensively sound Chester team.

That was not to say Chester did not create many opportunities themselves, but a combination of dogged DK defence, selflessness on their part, and dropped ball ensured the scoreline was always within reach for DK until the final quarter.

DK welcomed back front rowers Dan Shakespeare and Matt Humphreys to the side and although against a bigger pack, DK managed to control their set pieces well.

Possession
And through Pete Knight they managed to turn over a large amount of Chester possession that was not always well used.

The tactics of attacking at every opportunity always shows spirit and enterprise, but when things go wrong, leave the team vulnerable to the quick counterattack.

Playing into a strong wind in the first half the signs looked ominous again for the home side conceding two tries in the opening 10 minutes through wing Andrew Oakden and centre Richard Varkulis converted by his fellow centre Rhys Hayes.

However, this DK side do not know when to lie down,



Pete Knight goes on a determined while opposing players from Chester head to shut him down

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